Picturesque Interviews with Jesus

A STUDY OF THE MASTER PERSONALITY

ROLLIN H. WALKER

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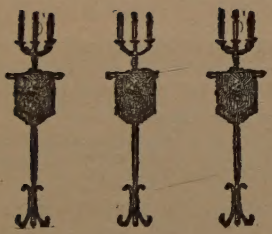
Some Picturesque Interviews with Jesus

A STUDY OF THE MASTER PERSONALITY



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Picturesque Interviews with Jesus

A STUDY OF THE MASTER PERSONALITY

By
ROLLIN H. WALKER

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY MOTHER

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
Or those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.

—*Tennyson.*

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PREFACE

In the life of a good piece of furniture there seem to be three stages. First it is new, and we put it in the parlor with pride. Then it becomes old-fashioned, and we relegate it to the attic. But at length it becomes an antique, and we see its beauty and get it down into the parlor again.

And so it is with ideas. First they are new and "all the rage"; then we are apt to carry them a little to an extreme and neglect counterbalancing truth. As a result they go very much out of style, and it is not good form even to mention them. But if there is something about those ideas that has essential value, in time they also become antique, and we get them down into the parlor again.

The writer wonders how soon it will be when the interest of our grandparents in the deep inward experiences of the Christian religion will be gotten down from the attic. These ideas would look very well indeed matched with our splendid modern interest in the social gospel.

This little volume anticipates such a revival of interest in the deeper personal experiences of God in the soul. The writer has been encouraged in his faith in a

coming renaissance of spiritual passion by countless interviews with college freshmen whose wistfulness to get hold of the inward realities has been altogether pathetic.

In the preparation of the book the writer has been under the profoundest obligations to his secretary, Miss Hutchisson, and to his colleague, Miss McCue. The book would hardly have been completed without the aid of their alert minds.

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Book

The "Interviews with Jesus" discussed in this volume are all of them taken from the Gospel of John.

The writer is aware of what scholars are saying about the fourth Gospel, and he is also aware of the very large amount of truth that is back of some of their assertions. He will only say that the newer views of the character of the fourth Gospel, instead of being a disturber of faith, are to him a refreshing indication of the freedom of the Spirit that prevailed in the early church. The Gospel shows that the first Christians had a vivid and wondrous assurance that Christ was alive with them after the resurrection, and was speaking his own direct message to their hearts.

The writer does not make any discrimination in his own mind between the authority of the more stenographic reports of the sayings of Jesus in the first three Gospels, and that of the inspired interpretation of these sayings in the fourth. The religious value of the fourth Gospel authenticates its divine authority. It is not one whit less the very word of Christ if, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, its form was somewhat changed to translate Christ's message to a church facing new dangers and difficulties.

The purpose of the writer is, very humbly, to imitate the inspired genius who wrote the fourth Gospel, and

to translate the ever-living truths which he uttered into forms that shall seem real and vital to the present generation, and more especially the generation that is just now coming on the scene.

SUGGESTIONS TO THE TEACHER

When the book is used for class study, the method pursued by the teacher should, of course, vary according to the nature of the group. Where conditions make it impossible to expect any previous study, the practicable thing is for the class to read the Scripture material, and then, the various parts having been assigned, to read through the little dramatization of the classroom discussion that is given under the heading, "The Young People Talk It Over." This ought to excite enough interest to elicit other questions, and to create an atmosphere in which the teacher could add needful help and stimulus.

Other groups will not only master the biblical text of the lesson, and the material presented in this book, but will also read some of the commentaries, and then perhaps use the "Questions for Classroom Discussion."

THE DRAMATIZED DISCUSSIONS

The reader will notice that the young people in these discussions go over much the same ground that is covered in the preceding exposition. This is not due to any inadvertence, but rather to the knowledge of the fact that the particular conceptions of the fourth Gospel are an exotic in much of our modern intellectual

atmosphere, and need to be said over and over many times, and in many ways, in order to be understood. And in his repetition of a few great vital ideas in varied forms the writer has followed the method of the fourth Gospel itself, which constantly repeats in chapter after chapter a few intensely practical conceptions that are difficult to get hold of because they are so alien to the world's ordinary course of thinking.

Some will question the wisdom of making these young people air their doubts with such frankness. They will say that it raises questions in the minds of the class of which they had never thought. That may be true; but in letting his young people express themselves with bald frankness the writer is again only following out the consistent method of the fourth Gospel. In it almost invariably, after Jesus has uttered one of his great sayings, we are given the stupid, or the skeptical, or the downright malicious reaction which it produced. The very spirit of the fourth Gospel is to let blasphemous unbelief air itself to the full. The purpose of John, doubtless, was to vaccinate his readers against these very objections when later they would be uttered by the enemies of Christ, or when they arose in their own minds to trouble their peace.

If anyone should say that these young people are made to talk with an insight beyond their years, the writer's only answer is that for a generation he has been handling college freshmen whose ages range from seventeen to nineteen, and he feels that he owes them an apology for not making the boys and girls in these

discussions talk with the piquant freshness and interest that he is accustomed to hear from the lips of his young students.

A Project for the Class

Another purpose of inserting the little dramatized discussions which occur under the heading, "The Young People Talk It Over," is to give the class a project. The thought of putting on one of these discussions at a young people's meeting, or an evening church service, will certainly help to maintain the interest of the class. And the work, if done with a genuine spiritual efflatus, will form a new and helpful type of evangelism.

The necessity for thorough preparation should be emphasized. Those who take the various parts ought to study more than the text of the little dramatization. They should first of all become thoroughly familiar with the Scripture on which the discussion is based. Their words will not be impressive, and the discussion will not be interesting, unless they know the material well enough to feel the emotion of the subject. And that emotion does not usually come save after earnest prayer, and long and quiet meditation on the text of the Scripture.

The principal task of the teacher in coaching the class will not be to drill the young people in elocution but to help them to a deep appreciation of the underlying thought of the lesson. This is no easy task, and will require great patience and sagacity.

In case this idea is carried out, the exercise should not

be advertised as a drama, because it is not a drama in the usual sense of that word. There are no lighting effects; there is no costuming, none of that swift play of action that holds the attention of the crowd. And those who come to church expecting to see a pageant, and find only a group of young people vigorously discussing a deep religious problem, will be disappointed, and will deem the affair a flat failure. On the other hand, if people come to church expecting the usual type of religious service, and find this innovation, they are likely to be pleased and delighted. Above all things, do not advertise these dramatized discussions as a "show."

When one of the discussions is to be presented, some one ought first to describe the characters that the young people represent, and to remind the audience that their freedom in blurting out their doubts and objections is following the exact method of the writer of John's Gospel.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO TALK IT OVER

Under the caption, "The Young People Talk It Over," the writer has attempted to give the reaction of a typical group of young people to the teachings of the Gospel.

Mr. Henderson, the teacher of this class, is vastly more interested in hearing the young people talk than in talking himself. Their spontaneity delights him, and back of their crude attempts at self-expression he quickly senses the reality for which their minds are groping, and tries to phrase it for them. Unlike some

teachers, when interrupted he does not have a look on his face which says, "I wish you would get through so that I can say something that is really worth while." He counts that class hour the most successful where the young people run ahead of him, and take out of his mouth the words he had intended to utter.

Of the members of the class, Thomas has the most to say. He is a fine young fellow, with a clear cut and discriminating mind, but withal a trifle pert. Everything in the Bible that does not harmonize with what he calls modern science seems unreal to him. It is needless to add that he does not know a great deal about modern science, having had only an elementary course in physics and biology in the high school. He is an earnest fellow, however, and the teacher sees that if he does not get a blight he will develop into a strong man, and he rejoices in this opportunity to spray him.

Then there is Mary, a typical mystic. She is intelligent and refined. The so-called scientific objections do not trouble her; nor, on the other hand, is she a stickler after the letter. She has a refreshing aptitude for getting at the heart of the helpfulness of the Bible. A kind of spiritual instinct, like the sense of smell, guides her to the vital things in the Word of God.

Margaret has thought less than the others, and is always horrified if anyone calls in question the literal interpretation of any part of the Bible. But, alas, it does not greatly trouble her that she often sees no practical relation between the Holy Book for which she feels such a reverence and her own problems. In this she is in contrast with Thomas, who is always

demanding to know how the Bible can be installed as an engine to make things go to-day.

And then there is James, who takes the Bible study as something that must be put up with because his crowd are taking it. He comes to class principally because Margaret comes. He is an attractive young fellow, and has sense, but the handling of the deep problems of religion is not exactly in his line.

Susie is a good-hearted girl, but she plainly thinks a lot more about the wave of the hair on the top of her head, than of the ideas that are supposed to be developing in her head. At times quite innocently she interjects remarks into the discussion that are absurdly out of place. But the more we have to do with Susie, the better we like her. She is refreshingly human.

Such is the class. We have all met their likes many times over and over again, and one imagines that they have first cousins everywhere on the American continent, and maybe some of these cousins will tune in and hear what their relatives are saying.

"Your heart shall rejoice,
And your joy no one taketh away from you."

JESUS AT A WEDDING

CANA OF GALILEE

JESUS AT A WEDDING

John 2. 1-11

THE STORY AND ITS MEANING

An Adventure in Hospitality

When we take up the story of Jesus at the wedding the first thing to note is that he was there. One wonders whether the little family at Cana would have dared to invite the great John the Baptist. They knew that he felt impelled to give himself so sternly to prayer and fasting in the wilderness that they would have feared a refusal. But Jesus was just the kind of a person that people would naturally invite to a wedding. And he seems to have made special effort to time his journey in order to get there on the appointed day.

But he brought along his new disciples who, of course, were not expected. And then as soon as it was noised about that a wonderful new teacher had arrived the village folk, in characteristic Oriental manner, doubtless crowded in curiously on the feast. All this seems to have challenged the generosity of these humble peasants beyond their resources. And so the wine failed. The adventure in hospitality seemed to have been disastrous.

Mary's Compulsive Faith

And Mary, perhaps knowing that the trouble came from the family's hospitality to Jesus, instinctively turned to her Son. We can easily believe that with the Old Testament background in her mind she expected

him to work miracles. And her confidence in him would flame up especially now, just after the witness of John the Baptist to Jesus, which the new disciples with excited enthusiasm would be sure to tell about.

The reply of Jesus shocks us. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." It is stern, unbending, and seems hardly respectful. Of course the word "woman," with which Jesus addresses his mother, is not of itself disrespectful. It seems so in the English, but it is not so in the Greek. We know this from the fact that Jesus used the same word in a tender address to his mother from the cross. Nevertheless, the reply, as a whole, is brusque, and has in it a note of reproof.

For what was Jesus reproving Mary? Certainly it was not for her anxiety to relieve the family from embarrassment. It is more than likely that, with radiant visions of his coming glory, she was suggesting that he work a sign to astonish the people. But it was alien to Jesus thus to work wonders in order to call attention to himself. His whole program seems to have been to teach men in a quiet way, and let them discover for themselves his divine power and grace.

Mary accepted the reproof of Jesus, but she did not for a moment surrender her hope and expectation that he would do something great. She had perhaps learned from experience that resistance to her precise plans never meant an unwillingness on the part of Jesus to help. Hence she turns to the servants, and says, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." And, of course, her submissive faith was honored by Jesus.

It is touching to think that Jesus' first miracle was coaxed out of him by the faith and eagerness of his own mother. If this is true, it was not the first time that a mother's faith had inspired to great deeds, nor—thank God!—the last.

AN AFFAIR OF THE KITCHEN

Some suggest that Jesus here suddenly changed his mind in obedience to an inner monition of God, and did what his mother desired after all. It is certain that his mother's faith influenced him, as faith always does. But it is to be noted that Jesus did not work this miracle before the crowd. Not even the ruler of the feast, nor the bridegroom, saw it. Jesus relieved the embarrassment, but he did not make a show of himself.

In working the miracle Jesus used the simple means at hand. He sent the servants to the village spring to fill the waterpots with water. It was an absurd proceeding! But Jesus always had power to fill the commonest people with great expectations. And so they obeyed. So imperial was his way of giving the command that they did their work thoroughly, for they filled the waterpots up to the brim.

After the waterpots were filled there was no incantation to change the water into wine. That was never Jesus' way. He quietly commanded them to draw out and bear to the governor of the feast. The responsibility was wholly laid over on God. "And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was, . . . the ruler of the

feast calleth the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when *men* have drunk freely, *then* that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now." This half-joking remark had no spiritual meaning in the mind of the ruler of the feast, but John sees in it a happy expression of what always happens when Christ is invited to a festive occasion. He brings a joy that is far deeper than the natural gayety, and it is a joy that lasts on to the end of the feast.

The story of the wedding in Cana of Galilee shows the genial character of the gospel of Christ. It does not call men away from the natural joys of living. It does not demand a repression of the normal instincts. It only demands that these spontaneous impulses of humanity shall be altar candles burning with the light of praise and thanksgiving.

DID IT EVER HAPPEN?

The modern mind naturally has great difficulty in accepting the miracle at Cana in Galilee as historical. One, of course, can never by a discussion settle the problem as to whether something happened two thousand years ago. The practical and scientific procedure for us to-day is to embark in the experiment of finding out whether, when we arrange our merry-makings according to the principles of Jesus, he really accepts the invitation to come. Does he, or does he not under such circumstances change life's dull, prosaic water into wine? Does social life that submits to his principles have a supernatural elevation of spirit? Are

those who include Jesus among their guests impelled in wonder to exclaim like the ruler of the feast, "Every man setteth on first the good wine; . . . thou hast kept the good wine until now"?

If the Christ of the wedding at Cana in a pronounced and altogether wonderful way still glorifies social life when he is given a chance, then we can believe that he is the divine Personality that the Gospel of John proclaims him to be. And if by experiment we find this true beyond any doubt, it will not be hard for most of us to believe that in order to launch this extraordinary revelation, God wrought wonderful signs in the external world to help the halting faith of men. The miracle which Christ works now will make it reasonable to believe in the miracle which Christ wrought then.

Of course if Christ cannot work the miraculous transformation of social life to-day, it is of little or no interest to find out whether he made water into wine at Cana. And if he does work the miracle to-day, then the heavens will not fall even if the miracle at Cana did not happen precisely in the way that John records it—for have we not now the Wonder-Worker in our hearts? The validity of the Christian religion most certainly does not hang on the historical character of any one physical miracle.

But as to the question of miracles in general, the writer does not think that it would ease our struggle for faith the least bit to dispense with them. Often in order to relieve the friction between our ordinary way of looking at things to-day and the Bible's view

point we prune off some of the biblical ideas. Our hope is that we shall make the rest easy to believe. But frequently in pruning off objectionable parts of the Bible we cut into vital elements, and we find that the mysterious power of the gospel is gone. Our creed has become more credible, but it is far less dynamic. And it is harder to hold the easy creed that does not convey the current than the hard creed that does.

Besides, we never stop to realize the difficulties that would swarm on us if we rejected the miracles. The spiritual conception of a divine Man is just as violently opposed to the naturalism of our day as are the physical miracles. And it is easier to take the whole of the New Testament account of Christ than to take only half of it. Believing in a Christ who was himself a spiritual miracle, and the worker of spiritual miracles, but who had no unique power over nature, is as awkward as walking with a shoe on one foot and no shoe on the other.

And few will doubt that if our teachers were no longer able to illustrate their message by referring back to these wonderful natural object lessons, they would be greatly handicapped in the work of proclaiming the spiritual Saviour to the masses of mankind. For, after all, most of the human race are still children, and demand something which they can see with their eyes as a sign of those spiritual realities which they are expected to believe with their hearts. And even those of us who are more sophisticated are subject to this childish need much more than we are willing to confess. It does seem that if God wanted to make a spiritual

revelation to mankind, he would make it in a way that would take hold of the heart and the imagination of the great masses of his children. And that is precisely the way in which the New Testament says that he did make it.

Jesus and Prohibition

A good many people are troubled by the apparent opposition of this story to our anti-alcoholic crusade. Our opposition to alcohol is based on the discoveries of science, and Jesus was not a teacher of science. Jesus was a great specialist. He came to impart eternal life and the spirit of brotherhood. The problem why Jesus did not declare for prohibition is precisely like the question why he did not warn his disciples against the danger of infection in passing the common communion cup. It was reserved to modern science by laborious experimentation to discover this danger. And it was also reserved to modern science to discover that even the smallest quantity of alcohol retards the action of the brain, and is therefore injurious.

Furthermore, it was not the method of Jesus violently to change the social customs of men. When he healed the centurion's slave he did not take an advanced position on the slavery question, and command that the healed slave should be freed. By his action he said a slave was worth making a journey to heal, and that was his hint that a slave was deserving of his freedom. And for the time being he went no further. But his doctrine of human brotherhood lighted a fuse that at length blew up the whole institution of slavery.

In illustrating spiritual truth Jesus used many most unsavory parables, like that of the unjust steward. He used them because they were so near to life that men could understand what he was trying to teach them. And this troublesome miracle for the mass of mankind is likewise an effective illustration of a deep spiritual reality which, when once taken into the soul, is an antidote to drink. For when the joy of Christ's gospel once permeates society the human heart will no longer be so empty and sad that it will demand the artificial stimulus of alcohol. In that day men will no longer be drunken with wine, because they are filled with the spirit.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE TALK IT OVER

(*The teacher comes into his library, and sits down at the table. There are five other chairs in the room. In a moment there is a knock at the door.*)

TEACHER: Come in.

(*Enter* MARY, MARGARET, SUSIE, THOMAS AND JAMES.)

TEACHER (*rising to greet them*): Good evening to you all!

ALL: Good evening, Mr. Henderson.

MARY: We are glad, Mr. Henderson, that as busy a man as you are is willing to take time to lead our class.

TEACHER: I expect to get any amount of pleasure out of studying the Bible with such a group as this, Mary.

(*They all sit down about the table*, JAMES *facing the audience.*)

THOMAS (*grinning*): Say, Mr. Henderson—

TEACHER: Well, Thomas?

THOMAS (*evidently embarrassed, hesitates before he speaks*): Uh—uh—anything but pious remarks allowed here?

TEACHER: What do you mean, Thomas?

THOMAS: Oh, I mean that questions keep bobbing up in my mind, but when I blurt them out people always seem so dreadfully shocked that I am sorry I spoke. I sure would like to unload some of my

doubts without having folks look at me as though I were a heavy villain.

TEACHER: I don't think you'll find me very easily shocked, Thomas. And I haven't the least objection to the frank expression of doubts so long as you don't think it's smart to be skeptical. Sometimes to express your difficulties clears the air. Besides, suppressed doubts often fester in the mind, and spread their poison through the whole system.

MARGARET (*horrified*): But isn't it a sin to have doubts about the Bible? And if we talk about them, won't we make others skeptical too?

JAMES: That's just what I say, Margaret.

TEACHER: I think doubts are a little like disease germs. They say that if a man threw the contents of a vessel containing millions of virulent diphtheria germs out into the blazing noonday sun, the light would soon kill them off. If we do not believe in the Bible enough to look squarely in the face of its difficulties, we have very little faith in it. Let us be frank with our doubts, not because we do not reverence the Bible, but because our confidence in it is so great.

JAMES: Well, I declare! That's a queer way to put it.

TEACHER: There's just one type of question that we ought to avoid here—the question that takes us afield from the practical purpose of the writer of the Gospel, and makes us forget that his goal was to reveal Christ. Many a Bible class is ditched

by vain discussions, and needs the help of a service station to right it up and put it on the road again.

James, you promised to give us the Scripture lesson to-night, didn't you?

JAMES: Well, I'll try it. (*He stands, and quotes John 2. 1-11.*) "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and Jesus also was bidden, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when the wine failed, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. Now there were six waterpots of stone set there after the Jews' manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast. And they bare it. And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when *men* have drunk freely, *then* that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him."

SUSIE (*with great enthusiasm*): Mary, have you heard the news? Harry Jones and Helen Moore are engaged!

MARY: Yes, Susie, but what has that to do with the lesson?

SUSIE: Oh, nothing. But this story is about a wedding, and that made me think of it.

(*The class look at one another, and smile.*)

THOMAS: It's a good thing they didn't have our sheriff in that county. He would have had them all in jail before the evening was over.

MARGARET (*looking at* THOMAS *with horror*): How dare you, Tom, talk about the Bible in that way?

THOMAS (*defiantly*): Well, we might as well face the facts, Margaret. Would the people at that wedding have been arrested under our prohibition laws, or would they not?

MARGARET: I suppose they would. But, anyway, I don't think it is reverent to talk about the Bible like that.

THOMAS: Since I am being naughty to-night, I will go you one more. Frankly, I don't believe that Jesus ever made a lot of wine out of water by magic. It is contrary to the laws of nature, and, anyhow, what's the sense of it? Making bread to feed people would be a good thing if it could be done, but why should Jesus make wine for folks who had probably already had more than enough? It's too much for me.

(*All the girls look at* THOMAS *disapprovingly.*)

JAMES: It's awful what you said, Tom, but I'm rather glad you said it, for I was thinking that very thing.

TEACHER: Now, having all our doubts placed before us, let us examine the lesson. In Bible study the first thing is always to get the idea that the writer is anxious to make us see, and if possible to feel the thrill of life that is back of it. After that we are better fitted to face the difficulties. Life first, problems afterward—that is the true order.

At the end of his Gospel the author suggests that he has omitted a great many stories of Jesus' wonderful works. Why do you suppose he leaves out these records of healing and puts here at the very forefront of his Gospel a story of Jesus making wine at a wedding?

MARY (*after a moment's pause*): I wonder if it was not to show that Jesus had sympathy not merely with the sick and the sorrowing, but also with the glad and the joyful.

TEACHER: I think you are on the right track, Mary. Jesus came to show us a new, and a better way of having a good time. When one sees certain groups of young people trying so hard to have a good time, and making such a failure of it, the hollowness of it all seems to be almost more pathetic than tears. It surely could be said of a lot of our young people in their feverish search for pleasure, "They have no wine."

SUSIE: I was at a dance the other night. Horrors! It was the biggest bore! When I got home I just sat down and cried.

TEACHER: And then think of the magazines young people read in search of a thrill.

THOMAS: Yes, I got hold of one last week. It certainly wasn't heavenly wine. It was hooch. A fellow told me it was good reading, but what he meant by that I don't know. It gave me a kind of moral headache all the next day, and I felt as though I needed an electric bath to soak it out of me.

MARGARET: A lot of our good times are dreadful bores, aren't they? What a sickish feeling one has after spending a whole evening trying to be smart!

JAMES: You feel like a ten-cent store—nothing over ten cents. I've often felt that way after a party when all I did was to try to make the girls giggle.

MARY: And just imagine, Jim, how the girls felt after listening to it all. (*They all laugh.*)

TEACHER: Well, it looks as though this were a practical question, doesn't it? And it would seem that a story that suggests that Christ can add a deep note of reality to our joys is worthy to go in the very forefront of a gospel. For the world has certainly not yet found the secret of joy. I sometimes wonder whether the deepening and purifying of our joys is not the primary task of religion. For a good part of our sins and our sorrows result from

wrong ways of attempting to have a good time. And I imagine this genial story of Jesus at the marriage in Cana has thrown a wonderful glow of spiritual light on weddings, and on the other festivities of life. At your own wedding you will hear the minister read from the ritual these words about marriage: "Which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee."

JAMES: I wonder why they ran out of wine.

TEACHER: Possibly the coming of Jesus with a group of his new disciples was more than the little household had bargained for.

MARGARET: I never could understand the harsh way Jesus spoke to his mother when she told him about the trouble of their friends. It would surely seem queer to hear a man to-day say to his mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

TEACHER: Jesus' answer is brusque, but it is not because he is annoyed. He loved his mother so much that he wanted to do what she asked. Hence her suggestion was really a subtle, gripping temptation to him, and he was always surgically brusque in the face of temptation.

THOMAS: What about this contradiction here? Jesus rebuffs his mother, and then he turns right around and works the miracle. What made him change his mind?

TEACHER: I do not think he did change his mind. His mother probably wished him to assemble the

entire company, and by working a miracle proclaim himself to be the Messiah. Jesus knew that such a course would arouse an unhealthy excitement and turn their minds away from his real message, and it would also hasten the furious jealousy of the Pharisees. So he rejects his mother's suggestion. But when Mary, submissive but unabashed, says to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," he cannot disappoint such faith. He must respond in some way, and so he works the miracle. But you notice it was an affair of the kitchen. The ruler of the feast knew not whence the wine was, but only the servants.

Mary, can you think of any light that this story throws on the matter of prayer?

MARY: Well, there is one thing. The mother of Jesus didn't seem to be discouraged when she didn't get what she asked for.

TEACHER: That is exactly it. God often seems to refuse us, but if we do not give up expecting something great, we receive an answer far better than we asked for. The one essential thing is to submit to God, and keep up our great expectations.

THOMAS: But do you really believe, Mr. Henderson, that this miracle ever happened?

TEACHER: I am perfectly sure, Thomas, that we cannot settle that matter by a long discussion here in class. It is possible, however, for us to find out whether, if we invite Christ to our weddings and merrymakings to-day, he will repeat the miracle. If he will do something wonderful for us to-day,

it will not be very hard to believe that he did something wonderful then.

SUSIE: But how can you send a wedding or a party invitation to Jesus?

TEACHER: How would you answer that question, class?

MARY (*after a pause*): I think one way would be to invite some people who are lonesome and don't often get to go to parties. He might be willing to come along with some of his unfashionable friends.

SUSIE: We'd have to tell him it wasn't going to be one of those parties where they turn out the lights, wouldn't we? (*She giggles.*)

TEACHER: We surely would.

MARGARET: I don't think he would like to come to a party where a little clique got off by themselves and snickered, and carried on, and made the rest feel that they were left out.

THOMAS: We would have to see that the jokes had been fumigated too.

TEACHER: You are all on the right line. And don't you imagine that, in general, it would need to be a party where people were not anxious to show off and have a good time for themselves?

JAMES: But what's a party for, but a good time?

TEACHER: Yes, but a feverish eagerness for a good time makes it flee from you. Better set out to give others a good time.

Let me ask another question. What time would this Christian party be apt to break up?

MARGARET: In time so that you wouldn't have a headache the next day, I suppose.

SUSIE: Then we wouldn't sing, "We won't go home until morning."

TEACHER: I rather guess when they begin to sing that, the Master has already left. And there is one other point I want to make. Jesus would not be apt to turn the water into wine at a party where they had so much luxury that no one felt the need of his help. I believe the heavenly hilarity comes at parties where you simply must have a miracle performed in order to make the common means of entertainment sufficient.

MARY (*thoughtfully*): That would be a dreadfully hard party to get up and manage. Would you pray about such a thing as that, Mr. Henderson?

THOMAS: There you go, Mary, planning to turn things into a prayer meeting. When I go in for a frolic I want a frolic. I don't want to mix that stuff together.

MARY: No, Tom, I don't mean a prayer meeting at all. I mean praying when you make your plans, and decide on your invitations.

TEACHER: Yes, Mary, I sometimes think it takes more religion to run a social than it does to lead a devotional meeting. For to run a party right takes iron courage at every turn to break over bad precedents, and yet do it in a winsome manner.

MARGARET: A party with Jesus as chaperon! Wouldn't that be great!

TEACHER: I'll tell you something even better than that, Margaret. Have a party where Christ is the guest of honor. A chaperon is a person who must be invited to a party in order to restrain the young people. The chief guest is one around whom all center their efforts to give him a royal good time. When Christ is honored in that way his joy overflows on all around, and in the light of his face the commonplace pleasure becomes radiant happiness. The water is turned into wine.

MARGARET: I would like to go to that kind of a party.

MARY: Why can't we have one like that?

JAMES: It would surely be something new.

MARGARET: Let's all talk it over on the way home.

(*They all rise to go. The* TEACHER *then rises with them.*)

TEACHER: But wait a minute, Thomas. We haven't finished your question about whether this miracle ever happened.

THOMAS: I'm willing to let that question rest till after we find out whether the miracle is worked at our party.

TEACHER: All right, Thomas. But for fear you might think I have tried to shunt your question about the relation of this story to our prohibition laws, let me say this one thing before you go.

This story seems to encourage drinking, but in reality the gospel of joy which it reveals tends to drive out drink. Men who have no deep sources of inspiration often resort to alcohol in a pitiful

attempt to make themselves feel good. But when once the genial religion of Christ thrills their hearts, what need have they of wine? The fact is, this account of Jesus at the wedding in Cana is the best kind of a temperance story. Good night.

CLASS: Good night.

(*They go out. Laughter is heard in the hall.*)

THOMAS (*sticking his head in at the door*): Oh, Mr. Henderson, you are invited to our party. We put you on the list of the wall flowers that we have decided to let in on this thing.

TEACHER (*laughs, and bows low*): Thank you very kindly, Thomas. I will try to be in full bloom.

(THOMAS *disappears. More laughter in the hall.*)

TEACHER: What grand rascals these youngsters are! Ha! ha! ha! (*He goes out by other door.*)

Let the audience join in singing,

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come."

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

John 2. 1-11

1. Why, in view of the fact that John had so many marvelous miracles to choose from (John 20. 30), do you imagine he selected this apparently trifling story of how Jesus helped out an embarrassment that had arisen at a wedding feast?

2. The new disciples would be struck with what contrast between Jesus and their former teacher, John the Baptist? (Matthew 11. 18, 19.)

3. Verses 3-5. (*a*) What did Mary probably desire Jesus to do?

(*b*) What was there about this request that elicited the shade of reproof in his answer?

(*c*) His hour was not yet come to do what?—perform a miracle, or publicly proclaim himself as the Messiah?

(*d*) How do you account for the fact that Mary, after meeting this refusal of Jesus, immediately turned to the servants and said, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it"?

4. Did the compulsive faith of his mother move Jesus to change his mind? Or are we to understand that he answered her faith, and yet at the same time held firmly to the plan God had marked out for him?

5. What in the way Jesus worked this miracle was different from the proceeding that his mother seemed to hope for?

6. Verse 11. "This beginning of his signs did Jesus . . . and manifested his glory." Does John have in mind any glory beside the glory of his power over nature?

7. "His disciples believed on him." In view of the fact that before the miracle at Cana the evangelist had told us how the disciples of Jesus believed on him (John 1. 41, 45, 49), how do you explain his statement that after the miracle they believed on him?

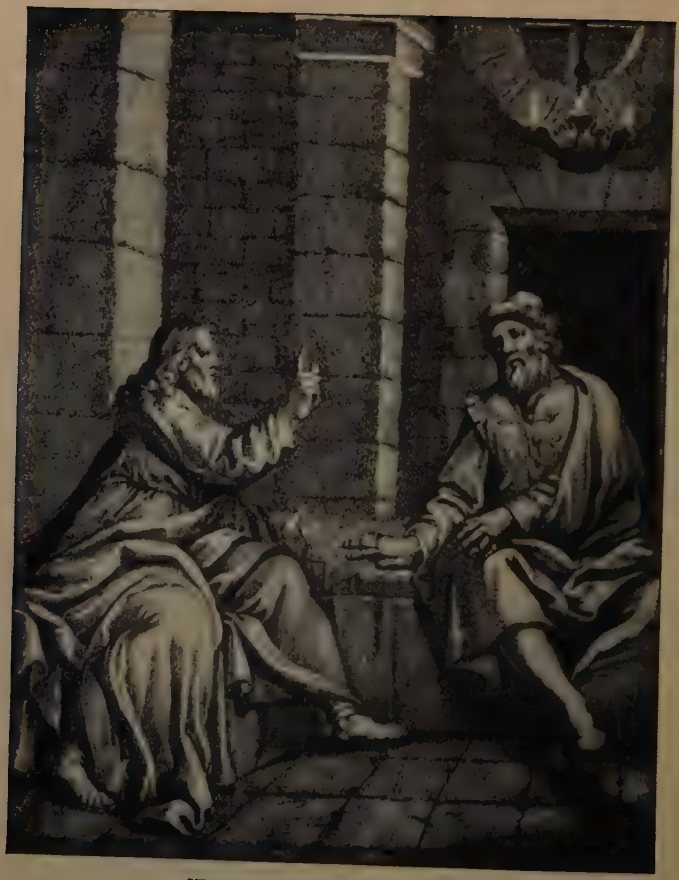
8. Some call in question the literal truth of this story, saying that it is a parable composed by the evangelist to express his conception of the gospel. Even if this were true, out of what kind of an experience of the power of Christ must it nevertheless have come?

9. What evidences have we that the spiritual miracle which the turning of the water into wine symbolized, was often worked in the apostolic church? (Acts 2. 13, 46; Ephesians 5. 18-21; Romans 14. 17.)

10. In what way and under what conditions may the followers of Jesus work the miracle to-day?

The one thing we need to be certain about in this age is the reality of the spiritual. The present day is paralyzed by a fear lest nothing be real save that which registers on the nerves at the end of the finger, or the optic nerves, or the tympanum of the ear, or the sensory filaments of the end of the tongue. We need a thousand scholars and thinkers to stand up and put the lie to this babyish delusion. We need somebody to take the world out from under the hypnotic spell of materialism, and to proclaim unashamed at every turn that the unseen is more real than the physical. We need someone to give us courage to rise and proclaim that which we already know, that the heaviest weights are those which cannot be registered on a Fairbanks scale, and the loudest sounds are those which cannot be sent out from a broadcasting station. What fools we are not to know that the Gettysburg oration has a louder sound than a steam whistle!

JESUS AND NICODEMUS



JESUS AND NICODEMUS

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

John 3. 1-21

THE STORY AND ITS MEANING

The Pressure on the Fire Hose

It seems absurd to say it, but it is actually true that chapters of the Bible go in and out of style just like neckties and ladies' gowns. During the present generation the third chapter of John's Gospel has been laid aside like an old-fashioned garment. Its emphasis upon the need of a new birth has been out of vogue.

The reason for this is that our great-grandfathers stressed the importance of a mysterious inner change, and paid little heed to the duty of putting religion into their social relationships. Men actually made great profession of being born again who in their factories were working little children twelve hours a day. Naturally, a kind of deep disgust with that sort of thing arose. In the reaction men went to the other extreme, and gave all their attention to stressing the Golden Rule, neglecting all parts of the Bible that emphasized inner religious experience.

Now, however, we are finding that social reform cannot get along without the driving power of these deep mystic experiences. Heroic efforts to change the economic, political, and social life of men always get the reformers into trouble, and they need a deep inner peace to keep them going. Men to-day are just a little like firemen who have been giving all their attention to

the directing of the water on the blaze, but have suddenly discovered that the pressure is lessening. So now they are sending back a detachment to look after the engine and the water supply.

A HUNDRED-PER-CENT JEW

To understand the tremendous meaning of this story of Nicodemus for our own day we must make a doctor's diagnosis of the character of this distinquished visitor of Jesus.

Nicodemus was evidently an earnest and sincere man, but he was tragically blind to certain great realities. He thought that by a studious fulfilling of the rules and rites of Judaism he was earning salvation. He was like some moderns who think that by performing this, that, and the other good deed, by giving so much money to the church, and by going to so many meetings, they can dress themselves up religiously in such a way as to be quite presentable at God's reception. It is only when a man is overwhelmed with the infinite tenderness and goodness of God, that he realizes that he cannot win God's favor by putting on a kind of spiritual dress suit.

Whenever a man catches a vision of the boundless love and compassion of the heavenly Father he is always ashamed of himself, and he quickly sees that no person by his own good works can ever make himself fit to be acknowledged as the son of such a Father. Indeed, the man who feels that his good works entitle him to the divine favor has really quite lost the vision of God. His complacency like a growing

cataract has covered his eyes. His God is a kind of imaginary slot machine so mechanical that he thinks his poor little penny of righteousness can work it. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely greater than that.

Furthermore, Nicodemus' failure to sense the infinite love of God gave him an arrogant attitude toward all people who did not have his particular type of punctilious religion. Doubtless with all other Pharisees he felt that nothing much could be made of the Gentiles. They would only be fit to form the lowest class of the new kingdom, and the best way to subdue them would be by terrifying miracles and by the sword. They might be useful for sending in big tribute to support Jehovah's Jewish kingdom.

It is easier to understand Nicodemus if we look at those people of Nordic blood to-day who refer to our brethren of a darker skin with epithets of contempt. He was of one spirit with all who think that the only way to deal with people of other races is by the strong hand of domineering imperialism.

BORN OF WATER

Now, of course, the only hope for a man with such an attitude is that he shall humble himself before God. Only so can the light of the divine love be turned on in his heart. But to humble himself was precisely what a Pharisee did not wish to do. When John the Baptist came preaching the baptism of repentance, the Pharisees said: "We are too good to need to be immersed in the Jordan. That is all right as a form for receiving

Gentiles into the church, but not for us. We are no heathen!" But in insisting that a man must be born of water as well as of the Spirit, Jesus says to Nicodemus that the Baptist was right in requiring immersion. He says that all Jews, especially those who, like the Pharisees, were proud and complacent, must come down to precisely the same level as the outsiders. They must acknowledge themselves dependent upon the cleansing mercy of God.

Of course the emphasis here is not upon the particular form in which a man humbles himself in the sight of God and men. When the rite of baptism had been thoroughly infected with pagan ideas, George Fox felt it right to dispense with it altogether for the time being. But the Quakers did not seek to be religious on the sly. They put on their peculiar garb, and thus emphasized their separateness from the world. And when the Salvation Army faced the difficulty of creating friction with some arm of the church by choosing one or the other form of baptism, General Booth refused to make the choice, but he fulfilled the spirit of the requirement by putting a uniform on his soldiers.

The essence of the command to be baptized is the duty of humbly, bravely, and publicly confessing our need of God and of our fellow men. To-day one of the most important ways of fulfilling this command is by giving heed to the neglected duty of church attendance. Presence at the common service of worship is the most modest way of saying, "I wish to be allied with Christ, and greatly feel the need of being a better and a wiser man." There are many who, before they enter into

anything like a rich religious experience, will be required, like Nicodemus, to humble themselves, and to make a practice of sitting with common and ignorant folk in the house of God, and listening to the common run of sermons. Even the most fastidious mind needs a little roughage for its intellectual health, and there is an amazing amount that the highbrow may learn from intercourse with ordinary Christians.

HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?

Of course Nicodemus was greatly mystified when Jesus said, "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This kind of talk was altogether out of the realm of his experience. First of all it offended his pride to be told that he needed such a reconstruction. Moreover, it was repugnant to his mind, for he did his thinking on the sense plane. "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" It was hard for him to believe that the new birth was possible. He could not understand the process, and his intellect revolted at accepting something that he could so little lay hold of.

But Jesus said to him, "While one cannot understand the origin and the process of the new birth, there are a great many facts that make us sure that it does take place. It is like the wind; you cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes, but nothing is surer than that the wind blows. Any man can feel it, and see its effects. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

WHERE THE X-RAY FAILS

How well history illustrates the words of Jesus! No one could show on a blueprint just what happened in the soul of Paul on the way to Damascus; but the result showed that an amazing change had taken place. We cannot describe what happened to Martin Luther scourging himself in his cell, but all at once a new faith and joy came to him. One could not have detected this change with an X-ray machine, but it turned the whole current of European history. And then there was John Wesley in the little meeting in Aldersgate Street. The psychologists cannot describe just how it happened, but his heart was strangely warmed that day, and as a result there sprang up a revival that spread over the world, and worked a mighty social transformation.

And these miraculous changes are not confined by any means to the geniuses of history. In every community we have instances of men who were formerly selfish and morose and passionate, and who now have become unselfish, cheerful and self-controlled. And when we ask the explanation they bow their heads in a kind of awe, and say, "It is a miracle."

It is curious how perfectly Nicodemus expresses the modern incredulity about spiritual realities. Some psychologists even call in question the reality of the soul, because they cannot verify its existence by any of their tests. Now and then a doctor says that he has opened up the vital cavities of a great many people and never found a soul, hence he is scientifically forced to the conclusion that there is no such thing.

But a military surgeon in the great war with equal justice might have said that he had opened up the vital cavities of a great many wounded soldiers, and never found any patriotism, therefore he was forced to conclude that patriotism does not exist. Nevertheless the very fact that soldiers lay there wounded proved that some invisible idealism had impelled them to risk their lives for their country. So likewise the outcome of the work wrought by Christ in the soul proclaims its reality. Indeed, nothing has more tangible and undeniable results than this mysterious and unseen spiritual change which we call the new birth. Even a horse knows when the love of God has come into a man's heart, for the galling collar is taken off and a healing lotion put upon his sores.

When in answer to Jesus' words about the necessity of a new birth, Nicodemus exclaims, "How can these things be?" Jesus suggests to him that his incredulity will have tragic consequences, for it means that he will not be able to see a great many other things. "If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" In the spiritual realm it is like it is in our college catalogues, where the attractive courses are apt to be marked, "Elective for those who have taken Course 1." And Course 1 in religion is the frank, humble acknowledgment of one's profound need of a spiritual rebirth.

"GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD"

The question naturally arises, Just how may a man enter into the experience of this mysterious new birth?

The teaching of the chapter on this matter is very plain and simple. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life." As the fundamental lack of mankind is their failure to understand the love of God, the way out is to look steadfastly at the cross of Christ, where that love was most vividly shown. Looking to the cross a man realizes the measure of God's love to the world. Christ somehow is the source from which the power to understand the love of God emanates. If a man will look to Christ, and continually act upon the impulses to love and faith which Christ gives him, he will find himself reborn. This new birth will express itself in great humility, great gratitude, and great charity, a charity which reaches out not merely to one's own racial group, but to all men of all races.

Of course the great test as to whether a man has experienced the new birth is his ability to be patient and kind to critical, censorious people. If a man has learned from his heart to give the soft answer that turneth away wrath, this is a far better sign of the new birth than a vision of angels. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." And by the brethren the apostle doubtless means not only those lovely and delightful people that never ruffle our pride, but people who are as cantankerous and hard to get along with as we are.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE TALK IT OVER

(*The* TEACHER *is sitting in his library with his Bible open before him. There is a sound of voices as of greetings, and then a knock at the door.*)

TEACHER: Come in.

(*Enter* MARY, MARGARET, SUSIE, JAMES, *and* THOMAS.)

CLASS: Good evening, Mr. Henderson.

TEACHER (*rises and shakes hands with them*): And so you are all here again this evening. That's good. (*He motions them to chairs.* MARY *sits facing the audience.*) This is a great lesson—especially for young highbrows like yourselves.

JAMES: Highbrows! That's a good one. I'm glad our high-school teachers aren't here to make unpleasant remarks.

(*All the class laugh.*)

TEACHER: Mary, I believe you are going to give us the lesson.

MARY (*rising, and in a firm, confident tone, quoting John 3. 1-16*): "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one by born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him,

How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things? And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, *even* the Son of man, who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

JAMES: Was Nicodemus a hypocrite like so many of the Pharisees?

TEACHER: No, James, I think not. When a hypocrite came to him, Jesus operated very quickly and left him. Jesus would not have spent so much time with Nicodemus if he had not been sincere.

SUSIE: Why do you suppose he came by night? Was he afraid?

TEACHER: Perhaps he came by night, Susie, because he thought he would have a better chance for a private talk. We must not be too quick to call Nicodemus a coward. It took more courage than most of us have for a member of the Jewish high court to risk ridicule by coming to Jesus at all. And it was a good deal for this proud scholar to call Jesus "Rabbi," or "Teacher," for Jesus had never graduated, you know. There must have been something big about Nicodemus or he would not have appreciated the bigness of the Carpenter Preacher.

THOMAS: Why was Jesus so short with him, then? Just imagine how you would feel if you went to have a talk with a preacher, and right at the start he told you that you must be entirely made over before you could understand what he was driving at.

TEACHER: Jesus was never suave to one who tempted him. The visit of this influential ruler who came to plan with him about the setting up of the Kingdom, brought back the old temptation that he had faced in the wilderness, when Satan urged him to conquer by force and politics.

Besides, to talk about the kingdom of God with Nicodemus was like talking about installing an electric light plant with a man whose only idea of illumination was a kerosene lamp. What was the use of it? Nicodemus thought that all Jews, by reason of their birth, were members of the kingdom of God, and had a right to conquer and enslave the rest of the world.

THOMAS: Oh, I see; Nicodemus was a hundred-per-cent Jew.

TEACHER: Exactly, Thomas. And he needed just what a hundred-per-cent American needs.

JAMES: What's the matter with a hundred-per-cent American? I believe in red-hot patriotism.

TEACHER: So do I, James. And a country in which so small a per cent of the citizens take the trouble to vote, certainly needs to have the batteries of its patriotism recharged. But, while some of those who style themselves hundred-per-cent Americans are of the true sort, as a rule, the man who talks a great deal about being a hundred-per-cent American does not mean one hundred-per-cent faithful to his public duties. He too often means that he is in favor of a policy toward foreigners at home and abroad that is arrogant and domineering. That is not patriotism; that is the road to national suicide.

MARGARET: But, Mr. Henderson, you talk as though being born again was simply feeling different toward foreigners. I always thought the new

birth was something miraculous that happened away down deep in a man's soul.

TEACHER: You are surely right, Margaret. The new birth is a great miracle. To take a race-proud, complacent man, like Nicodemus, and introduce him into a world in which the love of God is the central, throbbing reality, is a miracle greater than the kneading of hardened concrete with your soft, bare fingers. When once that miracle is worked, and a man catches sight of the divine love, he spends the rest of his life in looking around for a chance to say "Thank you" to God. And he does that by being kind to every poor soul that comes within his reach.

MARY: It takes off a whole lot of strain from being a Christian if all there is of it is just looking around for a chance to say "Thank you" to God.

TEACHER: It was intended that the strain should be taken off, Mary. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

THOMAS: But if being a Christian is just saying "Thank you" to God, why does Jesus go on to say that a man must be baptized?

TEACHER: Because the first way to express gratitude to God for what he has done is to repent. Baptism means repentance.

THOMAS: Then Nicodemus didn't need literally to be baptized?

TEACHER: You will be surprised when I say it, Thomas, but I really think that it was necessary for Nicodemus and his class actually to be baptized.

THOMAS: You don't mean to say that a man can't be saved unless he is dipped into water?

TEACHER: Oh, no. Our Quaker friends have never been baptized, but they have a large measure of the Spirit of God.

THOMAS: Then why do you say that Nicodemus had to be baptized?

TEACHER: The Jews felt that a Gentile dog needed to be washed, but not a Jew. But John the Baptist came saying, "Messiah's judgment will be so searching that all of you, with your miserable race pride, will need to be washed like Gentiles. Come down to the Jordan, and be baptized!" But the Pharisees looked on in a superior way, and said, "This is all very well for publicans and sinners, but not for us." But Jesus says that people who feel themselves too good to need baptism will always have to come to something of the sort before they get into the kingdom of heaven. Of course it is not water that he is stressing; he is stressing humility and contrition of heart.

THOMAS (*rising, pacing the floor, and gesticulating excitedly*): Somehow I just have a fierce objection to baptism, and rising for prayers, and going to the altar, and all that sort of thing. I don't believe in having our religion dragged out into the public gaze in that way. It's too sacred.

MARY (*pointing her finger at him*): I suppose, then, if you found that a man wanted to marry your sister in secret you would say it was all right, and much better than a church wedding?

THOMAS: No; that's different.

MARY (*defiantly*): Well, just how is it different? Isn't marriage a sacred thing?

THOMAS: Of course.

MARY: Then why should it not be a secret thing?

THOMAS: I'd be afraid that a man who didn't want to come out and marry my sister in public might not stand by her afterward.

MARY: I think that is just why people should make a public stand in the church. It burns the bridges behind them, and makes it dreadfully embarrassing to go back. It's hard enough to be a Christian, and the more barriers one can put up against going back, the better.

TEACHER: Yes, being a Christian takes a lot of nerve. I doubt if anyone can hold out who has not braced himself by a public confession. Then, too, this new birth is such an inward and spiritual thing that we all need outward symbols to keep its reality ever before us.

THOMAS: That's the worst trouble I find with this idea of being born again. It is so inward that I can't take hold of it. Jesus says it is like the wind, you cannot tell where it comes from, nor where it goes. That seems like saying,

"Open your mouth and shut your eyes,
I'll give you something to make you wise."

TEACHER: Let us look at that verse about the wind a little more closely. It says, "Thou hearest the

voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." Jesus does not suggest that the new birth is something that cannot be tested. A man can feel the wind blowing. Sometimes it even blows down a big tree, or unroofs a house. The results are plain enough. It is the wind itself that you cannot see. So it is with the new birth. The effects of it are manifest to everybody; it is the process that is unseen, and altogether mysterious.

JAMES: That's like electricity. I can put a radio together, and hear the music, but I don't understand what the battery does.

TEACHER: That's a capital illustration! James, you'd make a good preacher.

SUSIE (*pointing her finger at James mockingly*): The Reverend James Johnson, D.D.! Ha! ha! ha!

JAMES (*in a good-natured growl*): Oh, hush up, Susie!

TEACHER: Stranger things than that have happened. But to get back to the point. The radio is a very good illustration. The waves that bring the sounds are mysterious and unseen, and yet everyone can hear the music. And that is only an example of what we are doing all the time. We take for granted the reality of unseen forces, and depend on them and profit by them, although we cannot understand them.

THOMAS: But I don't want to take things for granted. I want to prove them and know them.

TEACHER: What you really mean is that you want to test everything by the optic nerve, or the nerve at the end of your finger or your tongue. (*A pause*) Thomas, do you believe in your mother's love?

THOMAS: I surely do!

TEACHER: Did you ever see your mother's love?

THOMAS: No.

TEACHER: What is the color of it? and its shape? Would it make you feel comfortable if a man should come along and show you what purported to be an X-ray picture of your mother's love? No, the very thought is repulsive. The fact in the case is, you don't want your mother's love reduced to something material. It is too sacred and too real for that. And neither do I want my consciousness of the Spirit of God brought down to sense tests. It also is too sacred and too real.

JAMES: But if religion is so spiritual, how can a poor fellow that doesn't pretend to be spiritual at all ever get hold of it?

TEACHER: You must remember, James, that ushering us into this new spiritual world is God's business, and not ours. Our business is to put ourselves into his hands and look to him. And the easy, natural way for a human being to look to God is to fix his eyes upon the cross of Christ. For the cross where Christ died for the world shows how unspeakably anxious God is to help us. The face of Christ is radium that builds up broken-down moral tissue, and revitalizes us.

THOMAS: But what do you mean by looking to Christ? A fellow with geometry to get, and Latin, can't keep the image of Christ before his mind all the time.

TEACHER: Thomas' question gives us a chance to consider what looking to Christ really means. Let me ask you some questions. Suppose, for instance, you were in a crowd where the tide of sentiment was setting in toward a wrong course. What would it be to look to Christ?

MARY (*after a pause*): I suppose it would be to think that Christ was there with his eye upon you, and then to set yourself against the wrong tide and act as though you thought he would help you out.

TEACHER: Quite so. And what would it be to look to Christ when you had a lesson that you could not get? (*Another pause.*)

MARGARET: Wouldn't it be to keep on studying even though you were not getting anywhere, with the idea that you would be helped out in the end?

TEACHER: Yes, Margaret. And when one meets some fierce, hot temptation that seems wholly irresistible, to look to Christ is to think of him, and remember that he was tempted, and then make a desperate dash for liberty.

Now, if a man keeps making little adventures of stretching out withered arms as though they were strong, the miracle will be wrought, and he will be born anew. His mind will be vitalized, his eyes opened, and his whole soul will be ushered into a

new world. All at once that great verse that we have said over so many times, will burst on him like a new revelation, and he will say to himself in astonished wonder, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

(*The* TEACHER *stands for a moment as though lost in meditation. The eyes of the class are fixed on him. Finally he smiles, and speaks quietly but distinctly.*)

TEACHER: Shall we sing,

"Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down?"

It is No. —.

(*The class find the place in the hymn book, and stand. The leader of the music signals to the audience to join in the singing.*)

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

John 3. 1-21

1. Verse 1. What have you to say, in general, of the class to which Nicodemus belonged (Matt. 23; Luke 18. 9-14), and of their conception of the nature of the kingdom of heaven? (Luke 17. 20, 21.)

2. Verses 2-15. Does the narrative of the interview with Nicodemus indicate that he was a sincere inquirer? Compare John 7. 50, 51, and 19. 39.

3. Verse 3. Nicodemus came to talk with Jesus about setting up the kingdom of God. He belonged to a class that expected the world to be conquered for the Messiah by sword and by stunning miracles. What in Jesus' program both for himself and his disciples, would it be wholly impossible for Nicodemus to appreciate without a

complete change of his point of view? The answer is suggested in Verse 14.

4. Verse 5. "Except one be born of water." Do you think Nicodemus had, or had not been baptized by the Baptist? Luke 7.30.)

5. As Jesus so strongly emphasized the spirit as over against the letter, and so greatly stressed love to God and man as over against rites and ceremonies, why did he say that Nicodemus and his class would have to be born of water as well as of the Spirit?

6. In saying that Nicodemus must be born of water is Jesus stressing the rite of baptism, or is he simply insisting on some form by which proud men shall humbly and publicly confess their need of God and their need of the help of their fellow men?

7. Verse 6. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Illustrate these words from modern church life. Can you instance methods of raising money, and increasing membership and attendance, that can scarcely be said to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, and certainly do not produce permanent results?

8. Verse 8. "The wind bloweth where it will." The wind is invisible and mysterious in its origin. What, however, do we know about it that is also true of the workings of the Spirit?

9. Verse 12. "How shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" The first verse of the Prologue, where the evangelist says, "In the beginning was the Word," is an illustration of the heavenly things to which reference is here made. They are things that cannot be proven by direct observation or experience. We believe them after having our minds quickened by the hand of God. They are leaps of faith that men make when God puts his dancing joy into their souls. The new birth, however, is here called an earthly thing. In view of the fact that it is a spiritual event, why is it called earthly?

10. What does this chapter suggest that a man needs to do in order to be born again?

11. Verses 16-21. Do you think that these verses are added reflections of Saint John which he could not repress, or are they a part of Jesus' original words to Nicodemus? If one were to conclude that they were inevitable reflections upon the words of Jesus which any sincere disciple would, in time, be compelled to make, would they be any less the real message of Christ than the precise words that he uttered?

"We go on a journey to seek a God in whom we live and move and have our being. It is as though the fish said, Where is water? and the bird cried, Where is the air?"—*Mouzon.*

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

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JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4. 1-42

THE STORY AND ITS MEANING

Bridging the Chasm of Race Prejudice

Jesus believed in hanging great masterpieces of art in the hovels of the poor, as well as in the palaces of the rich. There is no descent in the tone and majesty of his words as he turns from Nicodemus, the doctor of the law, to the poor Samaritan peasant who could not read. Moreover, unlike the other Jewish rabbis, Jesus was willing to spend his time in the instruction of a woman, and more than that, a woman who had shut herself out of all decent society.

A special reason for present-day interest in this interview is the fact that Jesus here sets himself against race prejudice. The racial repugnance of the Jews against Samaritans was heightened by a religious loathing that made their antipathy well-nigh incredible. And naturally enough this loathing was responded to by fierce hatred from the Samaritans. A situation more unpromising for the teacher of religion one could not well imagine.

The providential needs of men are often the means of their getting in touch with people. Jesus was thirsty. It is easily possible that during their hot morning's journey he and his disciples, simply because they were Jews, had been refused access to the village wells, and

he may have been fairly sick with thirst. Jesus was greatly in need of the help of this Samaritan, and he knew how to use his need to build a bridge over the chasm of race prejudice that separated his people and hers. And so he said to her, "Give me to drink."

When we wish to get into natural relations with people who feel that we look down on them, it is well to begin, as Jesus did, by asking a favor. And as we are usually too proud to ask a favor unless we are seriously in need of one, the very need is often a positive blessing. It is good for the aristocratic lady that some day she is reduced to straits and must run across the alley to the humbler home in the rear and borrow some eggs for the pudding. That begins a social contact that is not patronizing. It is good for America that she must say to China, "Give me a cup of tea;" and to Japan, "Give me a cup to drink it in;" and to Africa, "Give me rubber for my tires."

But the Samaritan's race prejudice, like a great bowlder in the road, threatened to wreck the conversation which had been begun so adroitly. To Jesus' request for a drink the woman answered, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?" He does not answer her question. He rather seems to say: "If you knew God's great willingness to bless you, and who it is that asks you a favor, you would seize the opportunity to ask of him a very much greater one. You would ask him for the living water."

The woman answered, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou

that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" The woman's words presented two splendid opportunities for getting off the track. If Jesus had said, "Yes, I am greater than Jacob," he would have told the truth; but he most certainly would not have succeeded in making the woman believe it. And if he had challenged her right to call Jacob her father, as any Jew could justly have done, she would have answered his challenge by curses.

INSPIRING HOPE

Jesus avoids both of these pitfalls, for he wants to waken in her heart that longing and hope, which was the chief need of this poor soul whose life was so dull and dead. And so he says, "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

Jesus will not define his greatness by contrasting himself with Jacob, but by stating what he can do for the woman now. To be sure, in one sense he really does claim to be greater than Jacob, but not in so many words. He simply says that he can impart to her a benefit which she well knew Jacob could not have given her. Her life was squalid and darkened. "Deep weariness and sated lust made human life a hell." She was like a pool of stagnant water covered with green scum. Jesus said he would make her like an artesian well, fresh and joyful, and full of everlasting hope.

No claim for himself could have been more audacious, but it was a claim that directed all attention to meeting his patient's need. This is the way one ought to describe the deity of Christ, by proclaiming his power to satisfy in the fullest way the deepest needs of despairing humanity.

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw." How absurd her misunderstanding! Some Christian workers would have foolishly said, "My dear woman, you don't understand me; I mean spiritual refreshment, not a magical substitute for well water." One can imagine the irritated disgust that would have come into the woman's face at such an explanation. She would have felt that she had been taken in by a hoax. And one can almost hear the profanity with which in some equivalent to our modern slang she would have said, "What are you giving me?"

Although Jesus had been misunderstood, he had not failed. For he had awakened in the woman's mind a great wistfulness. And that is the fundamental condition for receiving the blessings of God.

MISCONCEPTIONS MELTED AWAY

The next step was to see if she was willing to acknowledge the sin of her domestic relations. If she would do this, her misconceptions would be melted away by the warm sun of religious experience. So he said, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." The woman stood the test, and was honest with Jesus. She acknowledged the unsavory facts of her past life. Thereafter every-

thing went well, and her childish notions evaporated of themselves. The magic physical water was so far from her mind that she even forgot her waterpot, and went away into the city to tell the people of her spiritual discovery.

How suggestive to the modern messengers of Christ is this word of Jesus, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither"! It says, "If you wish to come to Christ, make your domestic and your business relations such that without embarrassment or hypocrisy you can say to those who are nearest to you, 'Come with me.' It says to the fashionable lady who would become religious, 'Go, call thy cook, and come hither;' and to the rich manufacturer, 'Go, call your workmen.'"

When Jesus makes this embarrassing request of the woman, she looks down, the color mounts to her cheek, and she hesitates. Then shame-facedly she says, "I have no husband." "Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly."

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." That is what we always say when some one comes to us and tells us the X-ray truth about our innermost soul. When a man sympathetically knows us and our sins, we conclude that he must also know God.

GERIZIM OR JERUSALEM?

So this woman at once put to Jesus what to her was the greatest of all theological problems. "Our fathers

worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Some people have thought that she was seeking to turn Jesus aside from the subject of her sins. That may be. But it is not likely that Jesus would have treated her question so respectfully if it had not been sincere. Furthermore, men are not required to dwell on their sins. All that is needed is to confess them and forsake them. The next thing is how to find God. And to this woman finding God was summed up in the question, Which is the right place to pray, Gerizim or Jerusalem?

In thus stressing a nonessential, however sincerely, she was just like some good people to-day who think that the central problem of religion is some matter in dispute between the sects, on which Jesus himself would have considered it beneath his dignity to take sides.

Now, the average Jew would have handled the question as to whether Gerizim or Jerusalem were the true place to worship in such a way as to cut off all further opportunity for usefulness on his part. He would have insisted that the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem was the only legitimate worship. Indeed, he could have quoted large parts of the Scripture to support his position.

But Jesus saw that the vital and important truth at issue was far deeper than either Samaritans or Jews understood. And so he said with prophetic passion, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship

the Father . . . God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." "For such doth the Father seek to be his worshipers."

What a new aspect this saying of Jesus gave to the whole problem of religion! Men had thought that they must make weary pilgrimages to shrines in order to find God. Jesus taught that God, with the eagerness of a detective, is seeking everywhere for humble hearts in which he can set up shrines for his worship. Jesus thus made possible a universal worship of Jehovah, because he imposed only those conditions which all men under all circumstances can fulfill. Many overworked and feeble folk could not go to the Temple, but all men could look to Jehovah with humble and contrite hearts, and venture on his loving kindness.

I AM HE

As Jesus spoke these words about God there came into the woman's mind the thought of the great Teacher for whom all men were looking. There was something so wonderful about Jesus' manner, and something so divine about the atmosphere that surrounded him, that she faintly surmised that he might be the Promised One. So said she, "I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

Jesus did not call himself the Messiah until the woman had heard and seen enough of him to make her at least suspect that he was the longed-for Hope of the ages. It was not his method to impose doctrines and

beliefs about himself upon people until their contact with him had aroused surmises in their hearts to which these doctrines would come as an answer.

"Upon this came his disciples; and they marveled that he was speaking with a woman; . . . So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and saith to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that *ever* I did: can this be the Christ?" She was not yet sure that he was the Christ, but she had a thrilled hope that he might be. And her eager hope brought the whole town out to hear him. When in spite of our doubts we show a keen anxiety that Christianity may turn out to be true, the statement of our hope is more convincing than the cold and passionless orthodoxy of those who never seem to have any doubts.

Jesus was so overjoyed that he forgot his hunger and his thirst. This makes us certain that the woman had really received the gift of the living water which he had proffered.

WHAT WAS THIS GIFT OF THE LIVING WATER?

In the first place there had come into her dull, burned-out life a great glowing hopefulness. She had also learned that God is eagerly seeking men, and, if they are willing to be found, he will find them as inevitably as the atmosphere finds its way into a room. Moreover, Jesus had called God Father, and that in itself, if believed, is a vitalizing revelation.

Yet the mere announcement of the spirituality of God, and of his universal Fatherhood, and of his

seeking love for mankind, would not have conveyed a blessing to this hopeless, sin-cursed villager. *But she had heard Jesus say these things.* Previous to this when she thought of God, she thought of the rapacious priests that officiated on Mount Gerizim. Hereafter when she thought of God he would always be associated with the "majestic sweetness" which sits "enthroned upon the Saviour's brow."

After the woman went away into the city, the disciples, noticing that Jesus had left untouched the food which they had brought, said, "Rabbi, eat." But Jesus answered them, with a smile, "I have meat to eat that ye know not." An inexpressible joy had come to him in imparting the life of God to this desolate and despairing creature, and it had nourished him in body and soul.

THE LIMITLESS ENTHUSIASM OF THE CHRIST

You see here the limitless enthusiasm of the youthful Christ. There was not much in that situation to inspire a man. He had been talking with an ignorant and disreputable woman, representing a people whom his race intensely despised. And yet he found in the experience something that lifted him to the highest thrill of delight.

Kindling with great missionary enthusiasm from this one success, he says, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." Here is a work, says

he, that pays the supreme wages of life and joy, a work whose results abide for ever.

Jesus had been able suddenly and quickly to stir this woman's hope to a glad fruition, and bring her to a new life. But he recognized that this success was due to the fact that great heroes had suffered to implant this hope among the people, and faithful rabbis had labored through the years to keep it alive. Great harvests which he suddenly reaped always reminded him of the patient labor of those who had gone before.

Soon over the hills came streaming the inhabitants of the Samaritan village, and they besought Jesus to abide with them. And he abode there two days, and many of them said unto the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

This is always the normal development of faith. Men first believe the witness of their fellow men. Through this faith they are brought into direct contact with Christ. Then they receive experiences that dissipate their misgivings, and make them sure in their innermost souls that Christ is their Saviour. And they find him so great a Saviour that they know he must also be the Saviour of the whole world.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE TALK IT OVER

(*The* TEACHER *is sitting, Bible in hand, reading alone by a table in his library. There is a knock at the door.*)

TEACHER: Come in.

(*Enter* MARY, MARGARET, SUSIE, JAMES, *and* THOMAS.)

TEACHER (*with joyous heartiness*): Good evening.

CLASS (*in chorus, merrily*): Good evening, Mr. Henderson.

(*The teacher stands. They come up and take him by the hand, one by one, and then seat themselves in a circle about him.*)

MARY: I think our lesson to-night is an easy one.

TEACHER: Yes, Mary, this lesson about the living water seems so simple that a savage under a cocoanut tree in central Africa ought to take it in at the first hearing. But beneath the surface are great, deep-lying truths, and we will miss them if we are not careful. But if we really do get hold of them, they will certainly freshen our whole lives and change for us the very face of the world.

Let us first, then, go over the lesson carefully, without the least hurry, searching for something that we never saw before. Mary, will you begin?

MARY (*rising, and quoting John 4. 5-10*): "So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph: and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by

the well. It was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

JAMES (*rising and quoting John 4. 11-16*): "The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither."

THOMAS (*rising, and quoting John 4. 17-22*): "The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well,

I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews."

SUSIE (*rising and quoting John 4. 23-29*): "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshipers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*. And upon this came his disciples; and they marveled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her? So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and saith to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that *ever* I did: can this be the Christ?"

MARGARET (*rising, and quoting John 4. 30-36*): "They went out of the city, and were coming to him.

In the meanwhile the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not. The disciples therefore said one to another, Hath any man brought him *aught* to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

(*It is especially important that the Scripture be spoken with distinctness and eager emotion.*)

JAMES: Who were these Samaritans, and why was it that the Jews had nothing to do with them?

MARGARET: Oh, I looked that up in the Bible dictionary, James. Here is what it said (*reads from a notebook*): "Northern Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B. C. And then the conquerors sent in some of their own countrymen to settle Samaria in place of the Israelites that had been carried off."

TEACHER: Do you know whether they adopted the Jewish religion or not, Margaret?

MARGARET: The Bible says they worshiped Jehovah and served their own gods.

THOMAS: I suppose they took on a thin varnish of religion like some people do to-day.

TEACHER: These Samaritans, being half-breeds in race and religion, were cordially hated by the Jews Their worst offense was that they set themselves up as true descendants of Jacob. You notice the woman here in our lesson speaks of "our father Jacob that gave us the well." That would have been positively infuriating to the average Jew.

THOMAS: Don't you think it was shrewd in Jesus to begin by asking a favor of this woman?

TEACHER: Yes, it surely was, Thomas; for, of course, she was just like the rest of us. We are always pleased to be asked for a favor by any one we suspect of feeling above us.

MARY: Yes, I can see that. If I lived on a back street, and I thought that the aristocratic lady on the front street looked down on me, she could get next to me better by running through the alley gate and asking for some of my lilacs, than by sending me a dozen roses out of her greenhouse.

SUSIE: I remember how it set me up when the principal of our building asked me to bring our car to take her home that day she sprained her ankle. Since then we have been good friends; before that I just hated her.

TEACHER: And you understand, of course, that this rule applies to nations, as well as to individuals. If we were a little more willing to receive what China and Japan and India have to teach us, we would be more successful in helping them.

THOMAS: The woman said, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?" Jesus might have told her that he was above race prejudice. Why do you suppose he didn't answer her question?

TEACHER: He did more than answer her question. He flooded it out. It was as though a farmer should say to a tourist who stopped by the road and asked the price of a handful of apples, "Bring me your sack." And when it was brought he would fill it with apples, and give it to the man without money and without price. Jesus seemed to say: "For me to break over the racial barriers a little is nothing. I will ignore them altogether, and give you freely the great gift of God." You see, Jesus wanted to stir up a new hope and eagerness in the woman's mind.

JAMES: But how stupid she was to think that the living water was something that would save her the trouble of coming to the well!

TEACHER: And the thing that interests me is that Jesus did not stop to tell her that she had misunderstood him. Her idea that the living water was a magic something that would save her from coming to the well was absurd, of course; but her misunderstanding would evaporate soon enough when she got that sense of God that always comes to people who are honest about their sins. Jesus simply said, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." Why do you suppose he made that request, Thomas?

THOMAS: Perhaps he wanted to see whether she would acknowledge her sins.

TEACHER: Exactly. That was the testing point with her, and the woman met it by an honest confession. After a moment of hesitation she said, "I have no husband."

MARGARET: My, how she must have blushed under the eyes of Jesus!

JAMES: And look how quick she changed the subject.

TEACHER: I don't believe Jesus wanted to stay on the subject of her immoral relations any more than she did. He was too refined for that. And are you sure that the woman's question was an attempt to evade the issue of her sins? I believe that the question of the right place to worship was to her the most bitterly pressing problem of religion. She felt that she could not get her sins forgiven unless she went to pray at precisely the right altar, and in precisely the right form. And here was a prophet!—perhaps she could get the question settled. How do you suppose the average Jew would have answered her?

THOMAS: Of course he would have told her that Jerusalem was the only place to worship, and that the Samaritan temple ought to be torn down at once.

JAMES: And that would have made her boiling mad, and she would have cursed him on the spot.

TEACHER: It is very suggestive to me that Jesus did not take sides in this religious quarrel between the

Jews and the Samaritans. And the reason was that he had thought deeply enough to see that there was a truth bigger than either Jew or Samaritan understood, the truth that God is a Spirit, and that men do not need to seek him in sanctuaries. Instead of that, God himself is seeking everywhere for worshipers with honest hearts. That idea made every place a possible sanctuary. It piped the water of life right into the poor woman's kitchen.

THOMAS: Suppose Mike Maloney asked you which is right, the Protestant or the Catholic religion. What would you say?

TEACHER: I would try to answer him, Thomas, just as Jesus did. I would say: "The hour cometh when a Christianity will be preached that embodies the good points of both the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. This new Christianity will have the Catholic reverence in the house of God, the Catholic dignity and beauty in worship, and their loyalty to their ministers. But on the other hand, it will have the Protestant freedom to study and interpret the Scriptures by the light of a man's own conscience, the Protestant fearless reception of all new truth that the Spirit of God is revealing, the Protestant freedom from superstition, and the glorious Protestant grip on the doctrine of salvation by faith."

I might help Mike a little after such a statement as that, but I certainly would not get anywhere with him if I were to say that the Catholics were

all wrong and the Protestants were all right. Every instinct of loyalty to family, clan, and race, would rise up in blind wrath against me. Furthermore, he knows us Protestants too well.

MARGARET: I wish you would tell us just what this "living water" was. We don't hear anything about this woman being converted and getting a religious experience.

TEACHER: The fountain of living water was the new feeling that came to her that God was somehow like Jesus. Jesus had for ever perfumed the idea of God for this poor woman. Thereafter whenever she thought of God, instead of shuddering as she was wont to do, she would remember that fascinatingly kind Stranger who had sat and talked with her by the well. She began to feel that the heavenly Father was as eager to help her as Jesus was. And when she believed that, everything good had begun in her life. She had the living water.

MARGARET (*with great eagerness*): Wouldn't it be great if we could do for people to-day the sort of thing Jesus did for that woman?

THOMAS: But it isn't natural for me to get off any of that pious stuff. I can see that it is a good thing to do, but I would feel like a hypocrite if I talked that way.

JAMES: Same here. When that Jones boy begins to talk pious it makes me sick.

TEACHER: You don't have to talk pious. The woman

didn't, and she brought the whole town out to hear Jesus. You only need to speak out of your own experience just as she did. Pious talk that disgusts us is apt to be either hypocritical, or it is the saying of things with a flat tire that ought only to be spoken with deep feeling. But if a man has not learned to talk religion, he can at least use his natural contacts with people to learn something from them, and thus let them feel that they are necessary to the world's life. And that will add to their self-respect and happiness.

JAMES: But a man can't go down to poor homes and knock at the door, and say, "Please teach me something."

TEACHER: No, you must assume as Jesus did that God himself will arrange natural interviews with needy people if you are only eager and ready for them. Isn't he doing it all the time? What are some of the natural contacts with people who are neglected in this community, that we might easily take advantage of if only our eyes were opened?

SUSIE (*laughs*): We might learn from the old banana man on the corner how to say "Good morning" to him in Italian.

MARY: You needn't laugh at that, Susie. If I were in a foreign land, I would like to hear someone say "Good morning" to me in English.

THOMAS: I might ask the Greek who runs the shoe-shining stand to tell me something about his country. That would make the Greek history we are studying a little more real.

MARY: We might ask the colored girl in our class to come and sing for us at one of our meetings. She surely can sing a lot better than we can.

TEACHER: And to feel that she could make a contribution to your meetings would certainly ease the sharp pain that she must constantly suffer from being socially ignored.

JAMES: But if I were the banana man or the shoe black, or the colored girl, and found a lot of nice folks like you all at once acting so kind to me, I don't think I would like it. I wouldn't want you to condescend to me.

TEACHER: You are perfectly right, James. No one likes to be patronized. And the most ignorant person can instantly detect the patronizing spirit. When you feel that you are being especially kind to people, you are never kind in the deepest sense. We must learn that these folks are just like the rest of us, only their circumstances are different; and we must treat them in the same natural and simple way that we treat our friends. If we do, we shall be amazed at the discoveries we make of hidden depths of refinement and character. The pathos and the wistfulness of their lives will make it almost inevitable for us to tell them that God pities them like a true father, and will help them if they trust him. And that is about all any one needs to have said to him. (*Closes his book, and rises. The class then rise.*) A few weeks from now, let's all get together and report the interesting things that we have learned from folks in this com-

munity that people look down on. If we put down their quaint remarks so we won't forget them, I prophesy that we shall have a delightful evening. We'll call it a "Gold Diggers Party."

THOMAS: Well, if we are to take up this matter of asking favors from the poor and the ignorant, I suppose I might as well start right now. Susie and Mary, may I have the favor of taking you home?

JAMES: That's a good idea, Tom. Margaret, may I take you home?

(*The girls all laugh, and they start out together. When they reach the door they turn to say good night.*)

CLASS: Good night, Mr. Henderson.

TEACHER: Good night. I hope you boys will succeed in learning a great deal from the young ladies.

(*The class go out. Enter Mrs. Henderson.*)

MRS. HENDERSON: Husband, I surely do sympathize with you. I overheard the last part of your lesson. Wasn't it a shame the way those boys turned that beautiful teaching into a mere joke?

TEACHER: But the question is, was it a good joke?

MRS. HENDERSON: Oh, yes, I had to laugh in spite of myself at the young rascals.

TEACHER: Don't worry about those boys, wife. They couldn't exist without boiling over in that way. To-morrow when they meet some of the ignorant foreigners of this town, believe my word,

they will remember the lesson and try to show the Christlike spirit.

MRS. HENDERSON: Well, perhaps you are right, husband. I must say that you have a habit of seeing a lot of good in people that the rest of us find very light and trifling. (*As they go out together, she suddenly laughs, and says*—) Come to think of it, that was just the point of your lesson, wasn't it?

Let audience join in singing:

"O Zion, haste, thy mission high fulfilling,
To tell to all the world that God is light;
That he who made all nations is not willing
One soul should perish, lost in shades of night."

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

John 4. 1-42

1. Reread John 3. 1-21, and compare it with 4. 1-42, noting contrasts and similarities between the two interviews.

2. Verse 5. "He cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar." Locate on the map.

3. What are the historical roots of the Jewish contempt for the Samaritans, and their natural reaction of hate? See 2 Kings 17. 7-33.

4. Was there any other reason for asking a drink from the Samaritan woman in addition to the simple fact that Jesus was thirsty?

5. Verse 15. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw." Why did not Jesus say, Woman, you misunderstand me, I am not talking about a magic physical water that is to save you from bodily thirst, but a spiritual refreshment that will satisfy the longings of your soul?

6. Verse 16. "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." What was the purpose of this injunction of Jesus? Was it out of regard to

the proprieties of the occasion, or was it designed to call the woman's attention to the chief impediment which was keeping her back from the divine gift, namely, her improper social relations?

7. Verse 19. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Where in John 1 do you find instances that show that Jesus' insight into human personality led to faith in him?

8. Verse 20. "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Was the woman seeking to turn aside the conversation from her sins, or was she really asking what seemed to her the central question of religion?

9. Verses 21-24. Jesus did not take sides on the question as to whether Jerusalem or Gerizim was the true place to worship. Why?

10. On what modern religious questions over which men quarrel angrily, will the true Christian teacher insist on doing something deeper than taking sides?

11. Verse 26. "I that speak unto thee am he." Jesus did not announce himself to the Jews as Messiah because the word "Messiah" suggested to them a military revolutionist who would place himself at their head, drive out their conquerors, and set up a Jewish state. Can you see from the woman's words any reason why he was not afraid of misleading her by calling himself the Messiah?

12. What was the living water which we are led to infer that the woman received?

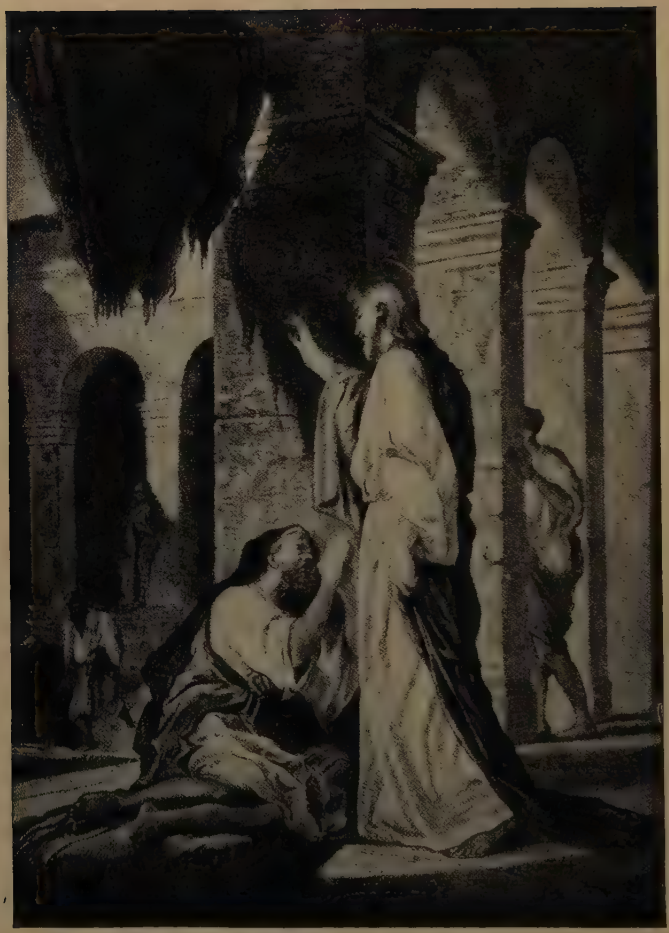
13. Verse 29. "Can this be the Christ?" The question in the Greek expects a negative answer. In view of the fact that doubt usually produces no good effect at all, why did this expression of the woman's doubt as to his Messiahship produce such a great effect in the village?

14. What evidence have we in this lesson that Jesus realized that quick results from religious work always implied faithful preparation that had gone before?

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever; a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

—*Browning.*

JESUS AND THE PARALYTIC



HEALING OF THE IMPOTENT MAN

JESUS AND THE PARALYTIC

John 5

THE STORY AND ITS MEANING

Hopeless Cases a Specialty

We are told that a great multitude of sick and blind and halt and withered, were lying about the pool of Bethesda. Jesus, the Great Physician, going down among them, found one paralytic who had been thirty-eight years in his infirmity. And as his specialty was hopeless cases, he went to the lame man and said, with a smile, "Wouldest thou be made whole?"

It seems at first sight an absurd question, for, of course, any man lying in that helpless condition desires to rise up and walk. But Jesus was not talking about faint desires and wishes; he was talking about that state of mind that summons the whole soul to attain an end, and is willing to make any experiment that promises the least hope of betterment. A man who had been thirty-eight years an invalid is liable to become mentally limp and aimless. Jesus is trying to make him gather himself together.

The man, however, instead of answering the question, says, "Sir, I have no man . . . to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." Like countless others with a handicap, his eyes were focused on his lacks, rather than on the one source of help. Jesus says, "Never mind the pool; arise, take up thy bed, and walk." And somehow the man got courage to attempt the impossible, and under

the eyes of Jesus the impossible was realized. He found himself picking up his bed and starting for home.

The evangelist means that we should see in this story the great central truth that Christ is always seeking those who need to be healed. Men do not have to go to him; he comes to them, and he comes to them in their utter helplessness. From first to last the Bible insists that God begins things. The one duty of man is to respond with vigorous faith and gratitude to the healing measures which God initiates.

LIFE IS MORE THAN LAW

This deed of healing was done on the Sabbath. To heal on the holy day was contrary to Jewish traditions, but the great tide of life which was flowing through Jesus overflowed all such scruples. To him nothing was important in the world but life springing from the love of God.

As the healed man walked through the streets he published the news of his cure on every side. He hailed even those with whom he had scarcely a speaking acquaintance, just as on Christmas Eve one is apt to smile and speak to almost anyone. Among these comparative strangers were some long-bearded and solemn-looking Pharisees. But instead of rejoicing with him at his new found strength, they said, wrathfully, "See what you are doing! You are carrying your rug on the Sabbath Day!"

Such criticism is the experience of every one who gets a big accession of the vitality that comes from Jesus. Strangely enough, new life always runs agog

of the scruples of very religious people who have lost the freshness of their touch with God. The new wine strains and breaks the old bottles. The world is full of people who would be vastly more irritated by a man who disturbed the proprieties of a church service with a hilarious testimony to God's healing power, than they are by the sufferings of many sick people who can find no cure. An evangelist who is used of God to reform wicked men by methods that ruffle up our sensibility is much more criticized for his unconventionalities than congratulated for his power to restore men to normal living.

When the paralytic finally discovered who it was that had healed him, he stupidly went and told it to Jesus' enemies, and they began to persecute him. Like many of his successors, Jesus had a hard time between the gossips and the bigots. Their persecution became so intense that it was murderous. Curious, tragic commentary on human nature, this, that a people who had a prophet who could heal the sick, dogged him to death because, forsooth, he overrode their morbid scruples. This has always been the way with men. The most violently hated man in any generation is apt to be a gloriously effective personality who blesses the race, but who irritates racial or religious prejudices.

In justification of his healing on the Sabbath, Jesus said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." This claim to have an immediate and direct personal relation with God was even more infuriating to the Jews than his disregard of the Sabbath conventions. "It is blasphemy!" they said.

CHRIST MOST DIVINE WHEN MOST HUMAN

In answer to the accusation of the Jews Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner." In discussing the claims of Christ we should always begin as Jesus does here, by stressing his subordination to the Father. Indeed, it was because he obeyed the will of God so perfectly that God could perfectly express himself through him.

Let us not be afraid of stressing the human limitations of our Lord, for out of his humbling of himself comes the chief manifestation of his deity. When we look at Christ writhing in the garden, and hear him saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," we are divinely helped in our own struggles. And when we see him on the cross dying, it is there that we come to know beyond a peradventure that through him and in him the mighty power of God is working for our salvation from sin and despair. Christ's human limitations and sufferings are like the gas mantle, they make his divinity shine out more luminously.

But while Jesus stresses his subordination to the Father, in immediate connection therewith he stresses his power. He says, "For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will. . . . He hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." Think of it! Empires and individuals are to rise and fall by Christ's standards!

No ambush is ever suddenly to arise out of the underbrush, and trip up the man who is following in the trail of Jesus.

"The hour cometh, and now is," says he, "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself: and he gave him authority to execute judgment because he is a son of man." This is the central claim of the Christian religion. Christ who is a real Son of man has within himself power to raise dead souls. Just as the paralytic got strength to be a man again when Jesus spoke to him, so at Christ's command dead hopes and palsied wills stand up in newness of life.

NOT ARGUMENT BUT EXPERIMENT

In considering this great claim of Jesus to be the source of life to dead souls, we should note in the beginning that the whole stress is laid upon what Jesus is able to do now. It is doubtful whether the evangelist would be strenuous for any particular way of stating the doctrine of the divinity of our Lord. He would be quite satisfied if men formed the habit of coming to Christ for everything they need, and were so confident that he would see them through that they were willing to run the risk of living up to his dangerously unselfish ethics.

Nothing is more contrary to the New Testament ideas of propriety than to have an angry discussion over the doctrine of the person of Christ. The labora-

tory test is so simple, so much within any man's reach, that it is always vastly more feasible to make a test than to have an argument. And after the test one can know for himself whether the Divine Musician can pull out all the stops of a man's little organ, and play thereon sweet harmonies that no earthly musician could bring out.

The first question that the Spirit always puts to one who is puzzled over the doctrine of the deity of Christ is this: "Wilt thou be made whole?" And then, "Counting on the help that Christ promises to give, wilt thou at once make the experiment of doing what he says?" More theological enlightenment will come out of that experiment than out of a thousand books on the deity of our Lord.

But, someone says, the experiment of accepting Christ is dangerous. But so also is the alternative experiment of rejecting him. And it is supremely perilous to lie down and do nothing, for then a man simply begins to decompose. There is no escaping of danger. We must all make some experiment. The question is, Which risk shall we take first?

THE ANCIENT WITNESSES TO CHRIST

Throughout the Bible there is overwhelming evidence in favor of choosing as the first experiment the way of Christ. And in this chapter there is an interesting grouping of these reasons why Christ's experiment has the prior claim.

John the Baptist is the first witness mentioned. He was the mightiest prophet for five hundred years, the

man who above all others of that generation could be supposed to know whether Jesus was what he claimed to be. (Usually the man who first draws attention to a creative genius is another genius who is big enough to see the tall height of a contemporary.) John's witness was rendered ten fold more credible by the fact that it was made at the sacrifice of his own popularity, for he deliberately turned his loved disciples away from himself and pointed them to Jesus as the long-expected Deliverer. Jesus knew that John's indorsement would be impressive to the people, and yet it was not a support on which he leaned.

"The indorsement on which I lean," says Jesus, "is the works which the Father constantly gives me to accomplish." He probably refers to his miracles of healing. And even these miracles Jesus did not deem the principal proofs of his claim, for he realized that false prophets might imitate them. But miracles were very useful and important for focusing the minds of the people upon him, in order that by a steady gaze they might be able to see the deeper and more convincing proofs of his divinity.

But Jesus goes on to mention another witness which he calls the witness of the Father. By this he means that subtle spiritual witness that the careless glance of the world never appreciates, but which any sensitive soul that begins to obey his teaching soon feels in full and overwhelming force. When a man looks at Jesus a long while his heart burns within him, and he has an impulse to fall on his knees. He knows in his innermost soul that Christ is so powerful and good and wise that

to resist him is to resist God. That impression is what Jesus calls the witness of the Father.

Jesus then adds the witness of the Scriptures. In the Scriptures is a record of the way in which through all previous history when men yielded to the principles which Jesus taught, they became happy and noble; and when they turned aside things went wrong in the world, dreadfully and tragically wrong. In the Scriptures also is the story of that long line of great, heroic souls who sang songs in the night, and whose assurance of the coming of a mighty Saviour seemed to increase with the darkness. And Jesus would have men see that the confident hopes of this great succession of noble martyrs simply had to be fulfilled or else history was a mockery, and God a liar.

THE MODERN WITNESSES TO CHRIST

All these witnesses which are mentioned in the Gospel have taken on new significance and value with the years. We understand the Old Testament better than the first century did, and we see more clearly than did these early Christians how that Jesus is the consummation of a great spiritual development that had been going on through the ages. He is no Christmas tree planted artificially in history. His roots stretch back through the centuries. He is part of a natural process.

And then to-day we have not only the witness of the Scripture that went before Jesus, but of the Scriptures which rose up after him. And following the New Testament come the apostolic fathers, and the great saints like Thomas à Kempis, and John Bunyan, and

the writers of our glorious hymns, each one saying, in its own way, "All hail the power of Jesus' name!" And enshrining these praises of Christ are great tunes and noble anthems and oratorios that constitute a kind of musical Bible, that seems to be inspired by the harmonies of heaven.

And then we have twenty centuries of history in which the risen Christ has wrought his mighty works of healing, establishing all over the world his hospitals and his medical missions, and his thousand fold philanthropies to minister to the sick bodies and the sick minds of men. The miracles which Jesus worked have now become organized into institutions of healing, and they happen continually. It is as though the lightning flash of divine grace had been enchained in a steady incandescent burner.

And more impressive than ever before is the spiritual witness of the Father to Christ. God has somehow made Jesus the main problem of every century since he ascended. And even in lands that are not counted part of Christendom the sages of other religions are pointing to him with a certain awe and affection as the One altogether lovely.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE TALK IT OVER

(*The teacher sits at his table writing. A knock is heard.*)

TEACHER: Come in.

(*Enter* THOMAS.)

TEACHER: Good evening, Thomas.

THOMAS: Good evening, Mr. Henderson. I hope I haven't disturbed you.

TEACHER: Certainly not. I'm glad you came early. You look as though you had a new idea.

THOMAS: Not a new idea, but a new feeling. You know I am expected to recite the last part of the lesson to-night. When I went to work on it, it seemed to me the dullest lesson we have had. And the more I studied it, the duller it seemed. But you said one day that if a man kept at a Bible lesson he would get his second wind, and I decided to try it. And so I held on with a death grip, and I had about concluded there was nothing in it, when all of a sudden the chapter opened up, and the last half hour I have felt like a man running up a big score at the end of the game.

TEACHER: And so, Thomas, you've discovered for yourself the best proof of the inspiration of the Bible. You can say now that you know the Bible is inspired because it inspires you. To make that discovery is an event in a man's life.

(*A knock is heard at the door.*)

TEACHER: Come in.

(MARY, MARGARET, SUSIE *and* JAMES *enter.*)

TEACHER (*rising and going to meet them*): Good evening.

ALL FOUR: Good evening, Mr. Henderson.

MARY: What! Tom, you here already! We waited for you down at the corner.

THOMAS: Yes, I came on ahead to-night.

(*They all seat themselves around the teacher, who takes his place at the table. Thomas and James should sit facing the audience.*)

TEACHER: Well, the boys are responsible for the lesson to-night. James, will you please begin?

JAMES (*rising, and quoting John 5. 1-18*): "After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep *gate* a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered. And a certain man was there, who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity. When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wouldest thou be made whole? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked. Now it was the sabbath on that day. So the Jews said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath, and it is not law-

ful for thee to take up thy bed. But he answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. They asked him, Who is the man that said unto thee, Take up *thy bed*, and walk? But he that was healed knew not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in the place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee. The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole. And for this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work. For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God."

THOMAS (*rising, and quoting John 5. 19-27*): "Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and greater works than these will he show him, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given

all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself: and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man."

SUSIE: It was funny for Jesus to ask this man if he wanted to be made whole. Of course every sick man wants to be cured.

TEACHER: But this man was so hopeless, Susie. He had been lying there so long, and others had been so often put into the pool before him, that he really did not expect anything to happen. And you young people cannot understand how dreadful it is when people cease to expect things to happen. Christ's first work must be to arouse a great expectation.

MARY: That is just what Jesus did with the Samaritan woman when he offered to give her the living water, isn't it?

TEACHER: Yes, Mary, hopelessness is a common disease. We all have paralysis in some form. That is why we can never begin anything ourselves.

Christ must always come to us to start things agoing.

THOMAS: They thought it was gas bubbles coming up through the spring that did the work. What a foolish superstition! I am glad we have got over that.

TEACHER: I wish we had gotten over all of our superstitions. But the world is full of people who are saying that if they could only get some kind of a mental crutch, or magical ointment, or healer's hand on their head, they would be all right. Whereas Christ is all the time standing by them in his majesty, and quietly saying to them, "Arise, and walk."

MARGARET: Jesus commanded the man not only to walk, but to carry his bed.

TEACHER: Yes, no man is quite healed who cannot carry something beside himself.

SUSIE: I can just imagine the look on his face as he went down the street, and I can hear him call out to his friends, "See, I am walking as well as anybody!"

TEACHER: I suppose he felt so good that he even asked the Pharisees to rejoice with him.

THOMAS: What was the matter with those fellows, anyhow? Instead of being glad that he was cured, they found fault with him for carrying his rug on the Sabbath. I'd call that inhuman!

SUSIE: They surely didn't have much religion.

THOMAS (*pounding the table*): I don't believe they had any religion at all!

MARGARET: But if they had had no religion at all, they would not have cared whether he broke the Sabbath or not.

TEACHER: We shall have to admit that they had religion, Margaret, but it was religion without love. When a man loses all vital hold upon God, his religion does not leave him. A poisoned rat goes away in search of water; but religion dies on the premises, and leaves its carcass to rot in the cellar. The carcass of a dead sense of God is apt to be a set of intense and hateful religious prejudices.

JAMES: Well, I'm glad we haven't that brand of religion to-day. Such fanatics!

TEACHER: Are you certain we haven't that kind of religion to-day, James? Suppose a member of a prominent Catholic family who is leading a dissipated life, would join the Protestant Church, and begin to be true and kind and clean. Are there no people in the Catholic church that would show more anger over his joining the Protestants than joy over his reformation?

JAMES: I suppose some Catholics are like that.

TEACHER: Well, let's turn the tables. Suppose a loose-living son of a Protestant family should fall in with a Catholic priest, and under his influence should completely reform, and finally determine to become a priest himself. Are there no Protestants who would be more angry about his becoming a Catholic than glad about his reforming his life?

JAMES (*laughing*): I think you have cornered me, Mr. Henderson. We'd better go on to the next point.

TEACHER: No, pardon me. Let's stay on that point just a minute longer. Suppose a new minister were to come to one of our churches, and on the first day he would preach so effectively that a couple of rather wild young men, with evident sincerity, would go forward and join the church. But suppose in the course of his sermon he should make a bad break in grammar. Are there no church members who would be more disgusted over his bad English, than glad over his power to win young men?

SUSIE: Why, Mrs. Sanders went about everywhere talking against our last preacher simply because she didn't like his choice of neckties.

TEACHER: So then we shall have to admit, shall we, that we are own cousins to these ancient Pharisees? Poor fellows! they were more interested in persecuting somebody for running over their Sabbath scruples, than in finding a man who could heal the sick. And how eagerly they followed up the scent when at last the foolish man told them who it was that had healed him! And how quick they were to raise the cry of blasphemy when Jesus said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work!"

THOMAS: I don't wonder that the people were furious at Jesus for claiming to be the Son of God, and the Judge of the world. We have been studying astronomy at school, and they tell us that the

Milky Way is one great mass of suns with worlds revolving around them. It sounds absurd to say that a poor man there in a carpenter's blouse was the only begotten Son of the God of the Milky Way!

TEACHER: Yes, it is hard to understand, Thomas. But you know the mystery of a thing does not disprove it. Life swarms with mysteries. Electricity is a mystery, but you do not insist on having it explained before you make use of it. And while the difficulty of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ is great, it is a plain fact of experience that if a man who is down-hearted looks to Christ he gets his courage back, as though God himself had recreated him. And if he is eaten up with remorse and despair, he can get through Christ a sense of forgiveness. People who are as morally helpless as this paralytic hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk;" and if they keep their eyes on Christ, and try it, they succeed. And this happens not once, but millions and millions of times. In fact, whatever the soul of man needs, he finds the supply of that need in Christ.

JAMES: But it seems so strange to call anybody divine who gets hungry and tired, and troubled.

TEACHER: And it is stranger still, James, that when you fasten your eyes upon the hunger of Christ, and his weariness, and his terrible suffering, it is just then that you feel his power to save you. When you want to get the divine current of

Christ's transforming power, the socket in which to screw your plug is one of his weaknesses. And when he is weakest of all, on the cross, there is the place where we find, beyond a doubt, that he has divine power to save the sinner from his sins.

THOMAS: But what difference does it make whether a man believes in the deity of Christ or not? Why can't we just take Jesus as an example?

TEACHER: Simply because we get into so many situations where a mere example is not enough. Nothing is more discouraging than a good example if we have not strength to follow it. It would have done that paralytic no good to have had some graceful and powerful soldier stride up and down before him with a perfect military step. What he wanted was some one to put life into him.

MARGARET: But how can we prove to other people that Jesus is divine?

TEACHER: We cannot prove it to others, Margaret. Every man must find that out for himself in the laboratory. And the more severe the test, the better. Sulphuric acid never hurts Christian truth. Indeed, it comes out of it with a healthy glow like one has after a plunge in the salt sea. The experiment is to commit one's life to the keeping of Christ, and find out whether he makes himself real to you.

THOMAS: But trusting all to Christ is risky. A man would have to give up his own plans to do that. And there are a good many things a fellow might

do besides experimenting under the direction of Jesus—and some of them promise a lot of fun.

TEACHER (*with eagerness*): We come now to the central point of the lesson. Thomas is quite right. It is a risky thing to adventure your all on Jesus. But it is also, of course, a dangerous thing, a very dangerous thing, to refuse to make the adventure. This is a dangerous world. There is no safety zone. We are forced by the pressure of life to make one adventure or another. The question is, Which experiment shall we make first? I don't believe that the Bible pretends to prove the deity of Christ, but it does propose to give us overwhelming arguments in favor of making Christ's experiment first. John here in this chapter gives a few of these witnesses to Christ. We cannot go into them fully now, but as we close suppose in your own language you just mention a few of the reasons why Christ ought to have the first chance to show what he can do for us.

MARGARET (*after a pause*): The best people we know all point to Christ as their help. (*A brief pause.*)

JAMES: And all the best people we read about to-day.

TEACHER: And if we knew history as we should, we would know that not merely heroes and saints of to-day point to Christ as the source of life, but all the great men of twenty centuries have done the same. And just think of the great literature that enshrines him, and the wonderful hymns, and the glorious music and art.

And then before Jesus there was that long line of prophets stretching back for a thousand years with their mysterious premonitions that there was to come some great Person who would solve the riddle of existence. See them as they hold out their torches of hope in the darkness! And then think of brave John the Baptist, the last, and one of the very greatest of the prophets, as he turned away the attention of the excited crowds from himself and pointed to Jesus, saying, "He is the man for whom you are looking!"

Can you think of any other reasons for making Christ's experiment first?

MARY: When I read about Christ a mysterious feeling comes to me, that I owe him my life, and that he is the only safe one to trust. And the more I read the Gospels the more that feeling deepens.

SUSIE: I don't know much about these things, but when I get into trouble I just know there is no other place to go except to Christ. And when I forget him, and get silly again, everything gets dark.

THOMAS: Of course, as you all know, I like to exercise my mind by taking the off side in a religious discussion. But when one gets down to the real thing, we young people have a lot of hard things to decide, and we have terrible temptations. And we just can't afford to make experiments that any fool can see are not turning out well in the people all around us. And when we are not bluffing

we know as well as we know our names that Christ ought to have the first chance to do what he can with us.

TEACHER: You are right, Thomas. A man is a fool to go down some dark alley to make an experiment when right before him is Christ's blazing way of light.

SUSIE (*with sudden enthusiasm*): Wouldn't it be great if suddenly Christ would begin to be as real to us as we are to one another? Life would have a thrill then, sure enough.

TEACHER: And wouldn't it be great if through Christ we could constantly impart this thrill and wonder to other hearts?

THOMAS: But how can you work yourself up to feel that way?

TEACHER: You don't have to work yourself up in the least. Just quietly begin to act as though Christ were with you in the little things of life, and it is his business to make you sure that he is there. The consciousness of his presence with us is the romance and the glory of life. To enter into this glory surely we ought all of us to be willing to run the risk of trusting him in the dark. What wonderful nerve men show in the pursuit of money, or fame! I cannot believe that we are of those who will not have the nerve humbly to hold on to Christ until suddenly there dawns upon us that sense of his power and his presence that will make all

life radiant and majestic. (*The teacher closes his Bible.*)

(*At this point let the person in charge of the music rise and say, "Let us all sing,"*

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall."

(*The class, who are also provided with hymn-books, turn to the hymn, rise with the audience, and all join in the singing.*)

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

John 5

1. It is the habit of John to go into minute details concerning the physical circumstances that form the background of a story. Point out illustrations of this characteristic in John 5. 1-9.

2. What in the circumstances of the paralytic might especially have laid hold on the compassion of Jesus?

3. What justification have the revisers in removing from the text the passage about the angel troubling the waters? See commenta ies.

4. After the healing of the paralytic "Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in the place" (verse 13). What might have been the consequences to Jesus' program of giving himself chiefly to teaching if he had worked his miracles in such manner as to attract the noisy, curious crowds concerned only to see another miracle?

5. What is there about the way in which Jesus worked this miracle that resembles the manner in which he wrought the miracle at the wedding in Cana?

6. The story of the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda and the reaction which the deed brought out from the Jewish leaders, emphasizes a vivid contrast between the spirit of Jesus and the spirit of the leaders. State it.

7. The first open break which this Gospel describes between Jesus and the Jews arises over the Sabbath question. Read from the

beginning of Mark's Gospel until you find the first account of hostility against Jesus, and note whether it arises from a similar cause.

8. What defense does Jesus make to the charge of Sabbath breaking? (Compare Mark 2. 23-27.)

9. When accused of blasphemy for calling God his own Father, how does Jesus begin his defense? by emphasizing his divinity, or his subordination to the Father?

10. Jesus says, The Father "gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man" (verse 27). Would it increase the influence and power of Christ if we could make out that he had never really been hungry or weary or troubled in mind like other men?

11. What aspects of Jesus' life and experience exercise the most divine power in melting the hard hearts of men? (Mark 15. 39.)

12. Jesus in John 5. 24-29 claims power to raise the spiritually dead, and power to raise the physically dead. In which verse does he make the first claim? In which the second?

13. Jesus in John 5. 30-47 enumerates various witnesses which God has given to substantiate his claims. Search through the section to find what these witnesses are, and make a full list of them.

14. Why is John the Baptist's witness to Jesus especially impressive?

15. When Jesus says the Scriptures bear witness to him, does he mean the Scriptures are full of almanac predictions of him? or does he mean that all the hopes and strivings of God's servants of old require the coming of such a Person as himself to give them meaning and fruition? (Isaiah 9. 5-7, 11. 1-9; Psalm 89; Isaiah 53; Psalm 22.)

16. To what kind of works does Jesus refer when he says, "The works which the Father hath given me to accomplish . . . bear witness of me"?

17. What witnesses, in addition to the witness of the miracles, is probably referred to by Jesus when he says, "The Father that sent me, he hath borne witness of me"? Are they the voices from heaven referred to in Matthew 3. 16, 17; 17. 5; John 12. 28-30, or the witnesses that are being given all the time such as are referred to in Luke 24. 32; John 16. 13, 14; Acts 2. 37; 1 Corinthians 2. 1-4? Or are we to say that Jesus had in mind both types of witnesses?

18. What additional witnesses to Christ, according to the promise of John 14. 12, have been given by the centuries since the ascension?

19. What do you mean by the divinity of Christ? Define it in terms of what he can do for men.

20. What is the one and only way of gaining an inner assurance of the divinity of Christ? (Luke 17. 11-14; Matthew 14. 26-29; Psalm 34. 8; Hebrews 3. 14.)

21. Where in John 5. 30-47 is it asserted that the punishment for not receiving Christ, the true messenger of God, is to be deceived into receiving a false messenger?

22. Does all of this discourse in its present form seem natural as the utterance of Jesus before the multitudes in Jerusalem, or is it likely that it contains comments by the evangelist which were inspired of God in order to adapt the message of Jesus to a later generation?

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
"Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene?"—
"Bravely!" said he; "for I of late have been
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ, the living bread."

—*Matthew Arnold.*

JESUS AND THE HUNGRY MULTITUDE

CHRIST FEEDING THE MULTITUDE

JESUS AND THE HUNGRY MULTITUDE

John 6

THE STORY AND ITS MEANING

Five Thousand Men Forget Their Hunger

Few who will read these pages realize what a hungry world this is. If we were to close our eyes, and try to imagine the feelings of the millions who this minute suffer the pangs of physical hunger, it would be a good preparation for the study of the story of the feeding of the five thousand. And if we were to close our eyes again, and try to realize the gaunt horror of that spiritual hunger which is found throughout the earth, we would be better prepared to appreciate the significance of the words of Jesus about that bread of life which if a man eat thereof he shall live forever.

It should be noted, to begin with, that John does not intend us to understand his story of the feeding of the five thousand as merely an allegory. He carefully gives us many small details about the time and place and circumstances which cannot, without violence or even absurdity, be pressed into an allegorical meaning. Those who call in question the fact of the miracle must simply differ from the writer of the Gospel. But while the story is not an allegory, John plainly expects us to see in the historical facts a mystic significance. This spiritual suggestiveness always plays like a half invisible lambent flame over John's stories.

It was risky for the multitude to follow Jesus out to

the desert where they could get no food. Yet when once he began to teach them they became so interested that they were not aware of the increasing demands of their hunger. But if they forgot their bodies, Jesus did not. And so when night came on apace he asked Philip, "Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" Andrew, who overheard the question, reported that all the food in sight consisted of five barley loaves, and two fishes, in the hands of a little boy.

But Jesus, in his imperial and daring way, answered, "Make the people sit down." And taking the lad into partnership, he gave thanks for his ridiculously small store, and began to distribute to the multitude. And his grateful assumption that the means which the Father had provided were sufficient for his children, was vindicated, as it always is. God multiplied the loaves.

This scanty supply for which Jesus was so grateful, was made more than enough to feed the five thousand. When they were filled Jesus, with a poor peasant's frugality and a devout man's sense of the sacredness of all the gifts of God, commanded the disciples to gather up the broken pieces. So they gathered up twelve baskets full of the fragments that were left from the loaves and the fishes. Doubtless they came in good stead for hungry men the next day.

That simple meal on the grass must have been a very joyous affair. True, they had nothing but bread and fishes, but think of the atmosphere of brotherhood! Social distinctions were completely forgotten in the presence of the great Brother of all men. Fortunately none of the Pharisees seemed to have been there.

They had not been willing to risk the missing of a good dinner by following Jesus out into the desert. But to those who were present there came a new and glowing joy, a glad premonition of the ideal day when all men with gratitude and love will feast before God. Some of them must have vividly realized that day that men do not "live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

REFUSING TO BE KING

Many, however, did not feel the spiritual significance of the hour. Rather was their blood fired at the sight of the miracle, and they said with uncontrollable excitement: "Here is the man who will lead us in our revolt against the Romans! Here is our chance to start a victorious war, for can he not feed his soldiers with bread from heaven?" And so they came to "take him by force, to make him king."

Jesus, who would flee no personal danger, fled this suggestion as though it were a plague. He pushed the disciples into a boat, shook the multitude off, and made forthwith for the solitude of the mountain where he might pray, and renew his consecration to set up not a temporal but a spiritual kingdom. During his night of prayer he was reenforced in his conviction that he must not give up the supreme dignity of reigning over men's hearts for the tinsel of an earthly throne. He knew that what people needed was not a new king, clad in purple, and surrounded by courtiers, but a new representative peasant who could show the people how to make a throne room of the humblest cottage, and

how to live an imperial life with no other insignia of office than a carpenter's blouse. He determined anew to pawn the kingship for the lordship of humanity.

A FULL HEART BETTER THAN A FULL DINNER PAIL

The next morning the multitudes that had stayed out in the open during the night were hungry. They had forgotten the spiritual exaltation of the day before, and hoping that he would feed them again, they started out to find Jesus.

When Jesus saw them he instinctively knew that they had not come to him for teaching but for food. And while he pitied them deeply, he could not encourage the wrong direction of their thought. It was pathetic that they were hungry, but it was still more pathetic that they thought of little else. So he said to them, "Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you."

With their fixed notion that men by their good works must buy the benefits of God, they answered, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus put the whole gospel into his reply, and said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

By this he meant, of course, that all their working and thinking must be done in response to the gracious work which Christ himself begins in the souls of men. The "work of God" is always in answer to what God has already done. It is lifting up our hand to meet his outstretched hand. It is tuning in with the music that

God is broadcasting. It is lifting the trolley to take the divine current. Faith is always activity, but activity that takes for granted that God is doing the major part of the work.

With childish unbelief they answered, "What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee?" (As though they had not just received a marvelous sign of the power of Christ!) "Our fathers," said they, "ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat." The old story of the manna had set them dreaming of a Utopia when bread would fall from heaven, and their dreadful struggle for food would forever cease.

But Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world." Of course the multitude did not see the significance of his deep words. They exclaimed lightly, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Jesus answered solemnly, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Jesus knew that the deepest need of humanity is not a change of mere physical environment, but, rather, the conscious presence of an overcoming and triumphant Personality who loves them to the limit, and stops at no sacrifice for their welfare. Their slogan was "A full dinner pail." "No," said he, "a full heart. What you need is courage and capacity to reign over evil circumstances. You do not need a new house; you need my

power to transform the one in which you now live, my power to reign like a king when I have no money in my pocket, and no place to lay my head. You must eat me up, and get my courage and spirit and faith and daring! That is what you need."

WHY MEN REJECT CHRIST

When Jesus made this great statement there cut through his mind like a knife a painful sense of the fact that his words would not be received by the mass of the men before him. For no man, as Professor Denney says, ever hears about feeding on the sacrificed life of Christ with anything but nausea, save at times when in his fight against sin he has reached a stage of moral desperation. Then and then alone is he willing to hear of the desperate sacrifice that God has made for his sins.

The multitude answered, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

"Murmur not among yourselves," says Jesus, "no man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him." This insistence of Jesus that a man must have divine drawing before he can come to Christ is celestial diameters removed from fatalism. It is, rather, an insistence on the fact that a man's attitude toward him is determined by his previous reactions to the lifelong wooings of God. It is impossible for a man to come to Jesus until he is honest with himself, and with God as he already knows him. The minute hand of the watch cannot move independently of the hour hand. Just as the constant hearing of low-class music in time renders a man incapable of sensing the majesty

of a great symphony, so habitual insincerity in one's inner attitude toward God paralyzes his power to appreciate the Son of God. It is possible so to trifle with conscience that when at length we find ourselves in Christ's provision store we have nothing in which to carry home the needed supplies.

In response to their cavils Jesus does not attempt to explain his great words, "I am the bread of life." The greatest truths do not so much need explanation as reiteration. If we just hear them often enough, their meaning sinks into our souls. If a city has a wonderful set of cathedral chimes, and the people are complaining that the tunes played on them are too sedate and classical, the best answer to them is to keep on playing the immortal music. In time it will win its own way.

THE HIGH COST OF SPIRITUAL LIVING

And so Jesus simply reasserts his proclamation that humanity can only be fed at infinite cost. The diet by which it is to be nursed back to health is nothing less than the sacrificed life of the Son of God. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

This refrain, "I will raise him up at the last day," is repeated all through the great discourse. One can scarcely realize the rush of emotion with which Jesus must have said these awe-inspiring words. "I will give humanity," says he, "a food that will do more than

assuage your hunger for an hour. I will satisfy your hunger forever, and render you unkillable."

When Jesus said that the multitude needed not food for their stomachs but the spiritual nourishment of his flesh and blood, we must keep in mind the fact that here was no man in comfort preaching down to ragged and undernourished children of poverty. He was a peasant; he knew the pangs of hunger; he knew from his own experience why these hollow-eyed peasants were eager for better economic conditions. But simply because he himself was poor, and had known all the woes that these people were then facing, he appreciated to the full the fact that a poor man's greatest need is unspeakably deeper and more tragic than his poverty.

HUMANITY'S DEEPEST NEED

Jesus knew that the most acute suffering comes from the tedium of life, from its loneliness, from its leaden skies of hopelessness, from unrequited love, treachery, bereavement, and a bad conscience. Hurt feelings and sick hearts are the deepest and most immedicable woes. Humanity is always asking Macbeth's question:

> "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart?"

Indeed, these inner woes of the mind are often so deep as to benumb our consciousness of outer discomforts. King Lear, exposed to the wild storm, says to Kent:

"Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee:
But where the greater malady is fix'd
The lesser is scarce felt. . . .
. . . The tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there."

In the midst of these rooted sorrows of the soul we make two contradictory demands. We call for a Helper who is human like ourselves, and has borne like woes and burdens. And yet, on the other hand, we ask for a Divine Presence, for no human being can be with us all the time. Think of the long night watches and the pillows wet with tears. In such troubles our only hope is the Man of Sorrows standing with us in the darkness, and laying upon us his pierced hand of comradeship and sympathy.

In Jesus Christ we have the human helper and the ever-present Divine Friend. His gospel does not merely say to a man in the zero hour, when he knows he must go over the top, "Fight the good fight with all thy might." It also says, "Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right." When the conflict is proving too hard, and our strength is almost gone, then in our time of supremest weakness we receive from him a mysterious reenforcement. It is as though at the bedside of a man nearing the gates of death a great, strong, healthy friend lay down and submitted to a transfusion of his blood.

THE ALTERNATIVES TO JESUS

But in spite of the divine unselfishness expressed in this offer of Christ to give himself a sacrifice to men, the mass of his disciples turned away. To those for whom the only solid things were food and drink and money, his words were mere sentimentality. To the complacent they were worse than sentimental; they were disgusting. The current away from Jesus was so strong that it threatened to carry with it even the twelve. And so he said to them, wistfully, "Would ye also go away?"

As Peter thought of turning again to the hollow-hearted rabbis, who for the Jews were the natural alternatives for Jesus, his mind revolted. And as he looked over the border of Palestine to the heathen priests and their sad-eyed and depraved devotees, his repulsion was even more intense. "Lord," said he, "to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

John Hutton says we are often driven to faith in Christ by the shudder that comes to us as we contemplate what life would be without him. This is true of us as individuals; it is also true of society as a whole. The terrible catastrophe of the World War gave us a glimpse of the horrors into which men necessarily plunge when they forget Christ. And as a result the great leaders in social reform are now saying, "It is Jesus' way of life or the abyss."

What did Peter mean when he said, "Thou hast the words of eternal life"? Did he mean, "We hope to gain

the life of heaven from your words"? Yes, but more than that. He meant eternal life here and now.

Peter had been a fisherman by the Galilæan lake, and life had been a squalid thing to him. His faculties were unawakened, and doubtless he had often been a failure in controlling himself. But when Jesus came along that day as he was mending the nets, and called him into his fellowship, there began a new era in Peter's life. His mind was quickened, his imagination was filled with great ambitions, his heart glowed with new human sympathies. Continually he had been conscious of getting a better grip on himself, of being able to express himself with more force and clearness. Continually he could see deeper into life. Continually God was more real and glorious. In a word, a new and creative life was thrilling his heart. And the same thing was true of all his fellow disciples. They were becoming men of imperial ambitions and faith and hope.

"We do not understand you," says Peter. "Your words baffle us and stumble us. But they send the life of God coursing through our souls. And we will not turn our backs on life and love."

THE YOUNG PEOPLE TALK IT OVER

PART I. THE LOAVES AND THE FISHES

(*The class enter, a merry group.*)

MARY: For once we are here before Mr. Henderson. Let's take our places, and open our books and look solemn. He'll think we have begun the lesson. James, you take the teacher's chair.

(*They take their places.* TEACHER *enters. He perceives what the class is up to, and halts at the door smiling.*)

JAMES (*solemnly*): Thomas, will you please explain the meaning of the second verse of the lesson?

(*Susie looks at the* TEACHER *and giggles. Then all the class laugh, and they rise to greet him, and show him to his chair.*)

THOMAS: We are glad you have decided to come to class, Mr. Henderson.

TEACHER: And I am glad to have such a pointed lesson in punctuality. By the way, Thomas, I heard James ask you to explain the second verse of the lesson. Perhaps you might do so now.

THOMAS: I might do it all right, Mr. Henderson, but I am afraid my answer would be too profound for James. (*James groans.*)

TEACHER: Well, your regular teacher is not troubled with profoundity, so James will have no difficulty on that score. Let us begin.

I believe Margaret and Susie are to repeat the lesson for us this time.

MARGARET (*rising and quoting John 6. 1-15*): "After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is *the sea* of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick. And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many? Jesus said, Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would. And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost. So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten. When therefore the people saw the sign which he did,

they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world."

SUSIE (*rising and quoting John 6. 15-21*): "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone. And when evening came, his disciples went down unto the sea; and they entered into a boat, and were going over the sea unto Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew. When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they behold Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I: be not afraid. They were willing therefore to receive him into the boat: and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going."

JAMES: Doesn't it seem strange that five thousand people should get so excited that they would go out into a desert without food?

SUSIE: What a fine chance that would have been for a quick-lunch man!

TEACHER: What power Jesus had! The forgetfulness of the crowd shows the extraordinary excitement that he had aroused. These people forgot everything else in their interest in him. No wonder Jesus fed them! He wanted them to know that absorption in the things of God did not mean starvation.

THOMAS: But I don't think they had a very fine meal. A lot of us students would strike if we were fed nothing but dried fish and bread without butter.

TEACHER: I am quite sure we would, Thomas. But you must remember that the customary food of these people was bread and fish. And also you must remember that sitting there with Jesus turned this common food into a feast. You know the food we eat is not as important as the people with whom we eat. Epictetus said, "First find some one to eat with, and then look around for something to eat." If by chance some Christmas Day you are alone in a big city, you will realize that a simple meal at home with mother is far better than an elaborate dinner in a restaurant. I doubt if, when the kingdom of heaven comes, we shall be serving up pretentious five-course dinners. We shall be too happy to care for such things.

THOMAS: I imagine it made some of the young smarties laugh to see Jesus saying grace over five loaves and two fishes, as though that were enough for all that crowd.

SUSIE: It was like a fashionable dinner to-day, wasn't it? When they say grace there's nothing on the table but the silverware. Ha! ha!

JAMES: It must have taken a lot of nerve to make the multitude sit down before he had anything in sight to feed them.

TEACHER: Yes, James, that was the method of Jesus. His idea of honoring God was always bravely

to assume that what God had provided was enough for the needs of his children. When he faced a situation where apparently the means at hand were not sufficient, the first thing he did was to thank God, and then begin to act as though he was sure that he had enough. This took a lot of courage.

MARY: I wonder if that method would work to-day.

SUSIE: No, of course not, Mary. We never saw a miracle, and I don't believe they happen now.

MARY: But, Susie, all of us have seen poor people who were so grateful for the little that they had that it made it seem like a great deal.

TEACHER: And we have all seen weak people who assumed that the Lord would help them, and they have succeeded in doing tasks that made strong men wonder.

JAMES: I know a fellow up at the factory who can't go to school. He gets more out of a volume of Shakespeare that he reads over and over again than some of us get out of a whole library.

TEACHER: That is a good illustration. God multiplies that one volume into a library for the boy because he makes the best of what he has.

Don't you imagine the disciples in the excitement over the miracle were a trifle bored by being given the humble task of picking up the fragments of bread and fishes? They would rather have posed around Jesus as the future prime ministers of the king.

JAMES: Why did Jesus tell them to gather up the fragments? He could easily have made more.

TEACHER: I suppose Jesus had the instinctive frugality of a poor peasant. And then he had an unusual sense of the sacredness of the gifts of God. It seemed to him like a profanation to waste any food that his Father had provided.

THOMAS: But after the miracle when the people wanted Jesus to head a revolution, I wonder why he didn't do it. What a terrible wretch Herod was! He had just cut off the head of John the Baptist. Surely it would have been a good thing to drive him out. (*Pounding the table.*) And Jesus could have done it!

JAMES: And then he could have set up a decent government, and made the scribes and Pharisees take a back seat. He might have had some chance then to teach the people.

MARGARET: What would have been the harm of Jesus leading these brave men and driving out their enemies?

(*James gives Margaret a nod, and a grateful look.*)

TEACHER: A victory over Herod would have meant a war with the Roman empire, and that would have been a long story of bloodshed. Jesus might have conquered, but he would have conquered by spreading desolation over the earth. And if he had finally reached the throne of Cæsar, there is reason to believe that in the process of killing

thousands and thousands of his fellow men he would have become a good deal like Cæsar himself. Then, too, you know when a man sets up a kingdom by blood he rarely has much influence with those whom he has conquered. The men of influence are those who shed their own blood for the people.

MARY: Do you think the desire of the crowd to make Jesus a king was a temptation to him?

TEACHER: What does the class think?

JAMES: It must have been if he was human.

TEACHER: You're right, James. He shows it by sending the multitude away with a strong hand, and climbing up to the mountain for a night of prayer. We must not conceive of Jesus as a weakly, pale kind of being, without natural ambition. He had the vehement and daring temper that made the thought of driving out the oppressors of his people a real temptation to him.

But let us leave Jesus in his prayer vigil up in the mountain for a moment, and think of the disciples out on the sea.

THOMAS: What a come-down they had! Just think of it! At the time of the miracle they were the center of thousands of eyes, and now an hour or so after, they are out there in the darkness about to be swamped by the waves.

TEACHER: That is a good symbol of the Christian life. One hour it seems as though God were right with us in great power, and then the next it seems as though we were the sport of blind chance. Those

wild waves seemed to be saying to the disciples, "There is no God at all." The only thing for them to do was to remember the God of the loaves and the fishes. Faith, you know, is carrying the convictions of our high moods into the darkness.

JAMES: But Christ soon came and helped them out. It's different with us.

TEACHER: No, James, I do not believe it is the least bit different. There are thousands of Christians who will tell you that again and again Christ comes to them in their darkness, and helps them out. To believe that he does is the very essence of being a Christian. Indeed, all the notable religious experiences come after a season of desperate and difficult rowing in a dark storm. Instead of being discouraged when these times come, we ought to think of them as the prelude of some glorious appearance of Christ. (TEACHER *closes his book, rises, and speaks with great enthusiasm.*) You know this being a Christian is a wonderfully romantic adventure. It is constantly getting into hard situations, and keeping up an eager expectation that Christ will come at the crisis and help us out. And what a great experience it is when he comes across the waters, and steps into our little boat, and immediately we are at the land whither we are going!

I believe I am in the mood to sing that old hymn of Charles Wesley,

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high!"

It is No. —.

(*The class find the place in the hymn book, and rises. The church chorister requests the audience to stand and join in the singing.*)

THE YOUNG PEOPLE TALK IT OVER

PART II. THE BREAD OF LIFE

Before the following discussion is presented in public, three young people should come forward and quote the Scripture on which it is founded. Let the first quote John 6. 24-35; the second John 6. 41-51; and the third John 6. 60-71.

(*After the young people have left the stage, the Teacher of the class enters and begins nervously to pace the floor. The stage has previously been arranged as a library.*)

TEACHER:

I feel like a man on the eve of a battle to-night. I must teach these young Americans those terrible words of Jesus about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and I know how they will draw back from me. Jesus lost most of his disciples when he first spoke these things, and I fear I will lose mine.

(*A knock is heard;* TEACHER *goes and admits* MARY, MARGARET, SUSIE, THOMAS, *and* JAMES.)

TEACHER: Good evening. I am glad to see you.

CLASS (*in concert*): Good evening, Mr. Henderson.

(TEACHER *shakes hands with them, and motions them to seats. They take their places in a circle around him.*)

TEACHER: Well, we have to-night about the most difficult, and to many people the most offensive lesson in the New Testament. The heart of it is the statement of Jesus, "Except ye eat the

flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves."

THOMAS: I'm glad we are going to have a chance to discuss that, for to be honest, Mr. Henderson, these hymns about being saved by the blood of Jesus are sickening to me. I'm a little ashamed to say it, but it is a fact.

TEACHER: Perhaps the thing that has sickened you, Thomas, is the light way some people talk of these things. That ought to sicken any one. Then, too, it often happens that we are disgusted with some outworn phrases and hackneyed illustrations, when we are not at all disgusted with the truths that are back of them. Meaningless language is apt to act like an emetic.

First of all, let us be sure we understand Jesus. What do you suppose he really meant when he said these words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood?

MARGARET: Didn't he mean you must take the sacrament?

TEACHER: He meant a lot more than that, Margaret. The bread and the wine are symbols that we partake of only on certain occasions; Jesus was talking about something on which men must live continually.

JAMES: I always thought he meant the sacrament, too. I don't see how you can make this apply to everyday life.

TEACHER: Of course this is too big a subject for us to compass in one lesson. But if a man cannot see all sides of a great mountain, that is no reason why he should not look at what he is able to see. So let us get back into your own experience. When you were a ten-year-old boy, James, what kind of stories did you like best, stories where the hero went off and sailed delightfully on a smooth lake, and then came back home and had a delicious supper, and afterward crept into his downy bed? Or did you like stories where the hero was shipwrecked, and left on a desert island, and escaped after incredible hardships?

JAMES: Of course there's only one answer to that question, Mr. Henderson.

SUSIE: Yes, and girls like to read adventures as well as boys.

TEACHER: You all got your thrills from reading about the hardships of your heroes, didn't you? Do you remember when you used to go camping, boys, and it rained, or the mosquitoes were bad, how you held out bravely, and had a good time, because you imagined you were the great Daniel Boone, or Robinson Crusoe, or some other hero of hardship and adventure?

THOMAS: Yes, I remember that when I was twelve I read a book about a great prospector, and I tramped the hills around here until I could hardly stand up, playing that I was prospecting for gold.

TEACHER: Now we come to the point. Jesus saw that

the only way he could get real heroism into life was to suffer for the world. Then he would capture the imagination of men, and they would all begin to "play" Christ.

MARY: But surely it means a lot more than that.

TEACHER: You're right, Mary; vastly more. (*He pauses.*) There come times when a book of adventures is far from enough to keep up your courage. Suppose a camper in the north woods were lying alone in his shack with a broken leg. What would he want?

JAMES: He'd want some neighboring camper to come and help him out.

TEACHER: But wouldn't good advice over the radio do?

JAMES: No, sir! he'd want a person right there to help him.

TEACHER: Precisely. And after the same fashion Jesus is saying that men must have more than good advice and high inspirations. They require the closest possible relation with himself. In their terrible trouble they must fairly feed on him.

THOMAS: But that sounds as though we must all become cannibals!

TEACHER: You are exactly right, Thomas. Man is the most terrible of all carnivora. The ox can get along with herbs, the lion must have the flesh and blood of some animal; but man to conquer in his fight needs a spiritual ferocity that he can only

get by feeding on God. Lots of young people are like tiger kittens that have never had a taste of blood. Poor souls! they act as though they were pussycats, and catching mice was big enough game for them. But let them once understand that the great good God suffers for them all the time in the way that Christ suffered on the cross, and that is like the first taste of blood for the tiger kitten. It puts fight into them, the kind of fight that the Bible is thinking about when it describes Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And then for the first time life begins to have a great thrill.

THOMAS: I do believe that's the trouble with our religion. There's not enough fight in it. Who wants to see a sissy game of croquet? Men like football where there's danger of getting your head broken.

JAMES: That's right, Tom, I really believe fellows would go to church if church members were risking their lives like soldiers.

TEACHER: Yes, James. Men like a fight. And if they knew that the leaders of the church were risking property and position, and everything, for principle, they would perhaps oppose the church, but they would never for a moment ignore it.

But you must not be too hard on the church, as if it did not contain heroes. Many of these quiet folks in our churches are doing things quite as heroic as the soldiers who faced the machine guns.

But the heroism that silently suffers for other people is not so dramatic. It cannot so easily be put into a picture show as the kind that leaves your enemy weltering in a pool of blood. A great many people are too dull to sense the majesty of spiritual heroism. That was why the crowd left Jesus. They wanted a leader who would head a revolution and act the part of a picture-show hero. Jesus was too great for that. And so they deserted him.

MARY: What a pity it was for them to leave him!

MARGARET: I don't understand it yet. How could they turn away from such a wonderful Man?

TEACHER: For exactly the same reason, Margaret, that people turn away to-day. Men want something big and theatrical. They are not interested in a humble life of sacrifice. Neither do they like to admit that they are bad enough to need dying for. It is as though in order to be kept alive one had to receive from some friend every day a transfusion of his blood. What an unpleasant obligation to gratitude that would put him under! He would feel it was a sin to waste a single ounce of his energy.

And so in the same manner, this thought of feeding on Christ was too much for the pride of these men. And the tide turned so strongly against Jesus that even the twelve felt the tug of it. And he said to them, "Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord,

to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

SUSIE: For once Peter blurted out something good. I just love him for saying that!

MARGARET: What did he mean by eternal life? Heaven?

TEACHER: Yes; but a great deal more than heaven. He meant that since he had begun to follow Jesus a mysterious vitality had come to him. Life was big and grand because he looked at everything through the eyes of Jesus. It was so big and grand that it seemed to him it could never end. We sometimes say that a thing is "too good to last." Peter said, This is too good not to last—it is eternal.

THOMAS: I wonder if Peter really understood what Jesus had been talking about.

TEACHER: Peter had an inkling of the truth. He knew in part. Nevertheless, he was greatly puzzled. Around the central spot of light there was darkness. Why, he kept asking, should Jesus deliberately say words that lost him all his following? But he looked into Jesus' face, and thought what it would mean to leave him; and then he shuddered. There was difficulty about following Jesus, but there was vastly more in turning away. How could he leave One whose very touch brought healing and strength, and go back to the hair-splitting rabbis who had no life to impart? It was unthinkable! "Lord," says Peter, "we have believed and know

that thou art the Holy One of God. When we are with thee, God is inexpressibly real to us. To follow thee is to follow God, and we will follow thee to the end."

And that was no idle boast of Peter's, for he and the rest of the twelve were faithful until one by one they all became martyrs of the cross. (*A pause.*)

Let us now sing that great hymn,

"In the cross of Christ I glory
Towering o'er the wrecks of time."

It is No. —.

(*The class find the place in the hymn book. The leader of the singing requests the audience to rise and join in the hymn.*)

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS

John 6

Preliminary Search Questions

1. We have illustrated in this chapter the fact that miracles never really satisfy the mind, nor give any permanent basis for faith, but, rather, produce an itching desire for more miracles. Find the place.

2. Jesus wishes the multitude to realize that he thoroughly understands their attitude toward him, and is not at all deceived as to the reception which his words are likely to have. Where does he make this evident?

3. It would be natural for the people to infer that their attitude toward Jesus was simply a matter of individual like and dislike, and had nothing to do with their general attitude toward God. Where, on the contrary, does Jesus insist that a man's attitude toward him is a true gauge of his attitude toward the inspirations of God that have previously come to him?

4. Where have we indications of the fact that the feeding of the five thousand and the following discourse marked a most decisive event in the life of Jesus, and meant both the culmination of his popularity and the turn of the tide against him?

5. Where does Jesus show that the temper of the people has turned his mind strongly toward the necessity of his approaching martyrdom?

6. The Jews put their faith in the good time that would come from a change of government and an ideal prosperity. Jesus, on the contrary, looks deeper, and says that men first need an inspiration and a dynamic that will make heroes of them, and transform their whole attitude toward life. From what, according to this chapter, is this dynamic to come?

Program of Class Discussion

7. Verses 1-14. What three particulars not mentioned in the other Gospels are given in this narrative of the feeding of the five thousand? (Matthew 14. 13-23; Mark 6. 30-46; Luke 9. 10-17.)

8. Verse 4. "Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand." Does John 5 suggest any reason why Jesus did not go up to this feast?

9. Verse 12. "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost." Why did Jesus give this command?

10. Verse 14. "This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world." Who, in this Gospel, had previously said, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet?" Compare the grounds on which, in the two cases, the faith had been based.

11. Verse 15. "They were about to come and take him by force, to make him king." What had just happened that would make Jesus particularly desirous of taking a hand in righting the political conditions in Palestine, and hence would render this a severe temptation to him? (Matthew 14. 1-12.) "Jesus . . . withdrew again into the mountain himself alone." For what purpose? (See Mark 6. 45-46.)

12. Verse 19. "About five and twenty or thirty furlongs." Compare with Mark 6. 47; Matthew 14. 24; where it says that they were in the middle of the sea. Do these statements agree with one another, and with the actual dimensions of the sea?

13. Of what very common experience of religious men is the disciples' sudden transition from the glory of the miracle to the helpfulness of the storm, a symbol?

14. Verses 25, 26. "When camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, . . . Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled." What previous instance have we had in this Gospel where Jesus did not answer the spoken question, but, rather, the unconscious need of his questioner?

15. Verse 34. "Lord, evermore give us this bread." This thoughtless request of the multitude makes you think of what similar request in a previous interview recorded in this Gospel?

16. Verse 44. Jesus' teachings are always for the purpose of helping his hearers. How would it help this crowd to be told, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him?" It would throw them back on the primary problem of first being loyal and sincere toward what and whom?

17. Verse 53. What does Jesus mean by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man? (Galatians 2. 20, 21; 6. 14; 2 Cor. 5. 14, 15.)

18. After the discourse on the Bread of Life there was a parting of the ways among the disciples. Many were unwilling to follow Jesus if it meant the surrender of certain immediate hopes? What were these hopes? (Luke 17. 20, 21; 19. 11; 1 Timothy 6. 5.)

19. Can you think of any other reasons why Jesus' words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood were offensive to the pride of the Jews? (1 Corinthians 1. 20-25.)

20. Verse 68. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" If Peter and the twelve had turned away from Jesus to escape the difficulties of following him, what alternatives would they have been compelled to choose?

21. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Try to imagine some of the experiences that had made Peter sure of this. Compare Paul's experience (Romans 5. 1-5).

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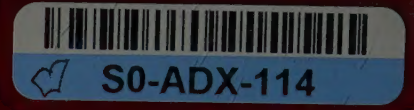
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